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In the SIGN OF THE PURPLE DAGGER

By

J. WILLARD LINCOLN

FIRST PART IN THIS ISSUE

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The Editor Has His Say Here

BEGINNING next week you will have the pleasure of reading a masterful serial. It is not the kind of story which has predominated in the Ledger in the past, but we thought it so very much worth while that we decided to let you have it. To those of us who do not deal with international affairs, with their diplomacy and intrigues, there is a fascination about the almost unbelievable things which occur daily in the far corners of the world. Perhaps you will be inclined to scoff at the possibility of all-destroying rays, containing the power to destroy at the will of their manipulator. But remember that our forefathers scoffed at the telephone, the telegraph, the steamboat—at every one of a thousand things which today are almost necessities of life. Perhaps even now some scientist has these rays but is keeping their secret to himself lest even greater horrors be added to the many which envelop the world. Read this serial, "Attila of the Destroying Rays," not just as a figment of the imagination but as a possibility of the future. We hope they never will be realized for use in warfare, but should a German scientist happen to discover them no power on earth would prevent the maddened Kaiser and his commanders from using them to try to wrest victory from their hopeless fighting.

THE other serials which will be continued next week should be fully as interesting in their way as is "Attila." The one which begins this week, "In the Sign of the Purple Dagger," and "Into the Primitive," which reaches the half-way mark with this issue, are splendid stories and we know you are enjoying them. To the new readers who are joining the Ledger circle for the first time this week, we want to point out that complete synopses appear with each installment and that by reading the synopsis first you can go on with the story. Sometimes, tho, a reader does not like to begin that way. He wants to read the complete story or none of it. That is why we always keep on hand a large supply of back copies of every issue of the Ledger. They may be obtained from our agents, newsdealers or direct from our office.

The Editor.

The Soul of the U-Boat Commander

BY BYRON SELLERS

(Concluded From Last Week.)

In one of the editions of the Ledger last week the conclusion of the story "The Soul of the U-Boat Commander," on pages 6, 7 and 8, was omitted. For the benefit of those readers who did not get the complete story the conclusion is printed here.

"What has been done for the Fatherland has been done willingly—yes, joyfully. What true German could do less? I have done my duty as I have seen it—who could do more?"

"No one could do more! No one has done more than you have, Herr Commander. But England has not yet felt our strength; we will strike together. You shall be in command of a division of submarines; that will be part of your reward for yesterday's work."

At any other time this recognition of his ability would have brought gladness to Reinhart's heart; but now, there was no response—only the deathly silence that looks at the future without a word, knowing not what it may bring.

He saluted and returned to the U-boat. There was something consoling about the little craft. They had been friends; they had fought the same battle of life—both for existence. Here he would find solace, when there was no other place to go.

A month passed. The U-76 had made two excursions to the North Sea with marked result. But on Reinhart's mind was that haunting vision; he knew that some day the Emperor and Von Tulkne would learn the truth of his disobedience, and that when such time arrived he would have to face the stern dispensers of the martial law; the law that was known and dreaded thruout the kingdom.

He did not shrink from these thoughts thru fear. He did not fear all the punishment Von Tulkne could bring to bear. Fear had no place in his heart—only the terrible suspense and uncertainty of it all caused him to act with such indifference as to the success of the last few trips. Waltreim noted this change in his comniander, but with the respect and reverence that comes with constant association, he said nothing, leaving him to fight the silent battle alone.

* * * * * * *

The hushed silence was stifling—deathly. A group of uniformed men was entering. Upon their decision—the decision of this little group of men that had been appointed by the command of the Emperor—rested the fate of Karl Reinhart. They were to try a court-martial the charges against him; their verdict was final—there was no appeal—no court of last resort—this was the highest court of the realm.

Not a muscle of the commander twitched; the men who had tried him were silent and determined. However much they might have sympathized with the prisoner this was no time—no place—to allow leniency. An example must be made of this case. Germany must not suffer at the hands of the disobedient or the treacherous.

The verdict was—Death at the hands of a firing squad.

Without being given a chance to make a statement in defense of his actions, Reinhart was led to prison to await the coming of that fateful day—the day when Germany would demand the extreme penalty, the penalty that would mean the taking of his life.

The day of the execution dawned bright and fair. Back in the prison yard were assembled the officers and soldiers whose duty it was to carry out the orders of the military court.

Reinhart, dry-eyed and defiant, walked to the designated place and stood looking at the twelve determined men who were holding their rifles in expectant readiness, waiting for the order to fire the fatal shots.

One approached Reinhart with the regulation black cloth to blindfold him, but he was decisively waved aside. "I need nothing! I can face them as I have faced death before. Do you think that Reinhart, the commander of the U-76, would need a shield to blind him from the inevitable?"

The man answered not. He knew of the boldness of this man, and he was not surprised that he was so unceremoniously waved aside.

They stood facing him; twelve rifles pointed toward him. The officer in charge faced the prisoner and gave the fatal commands—"Ready! Aim! Fire!" There was a sharp report and Reinhart sank to the ground. The soldiers solemnly filed out of the prison yard—without a sigh—without a tear; while on the ground lay the lifeless body of Karl Reinhart, the soul that had sacrificed all; had paid the full penalty—his life.

He had loved America more than he hated England or feared Germany.

* * *

A Long Stay.

"The cook wants to borrow something from the library. Shall I let her have it?"

"Certainly. If she gets interested in a story she may stay until she finishes it. Give her one of those long English novels in four volumes."

* * *

The Wrong Order.

"Ma'am, here's a man at the door with a parcel for you."

"What is it, Bridget?"

"It's a fish, ma'am, and its marked C. O. D."

"Then make the man take it straight back to the dealer. I ordered trout."

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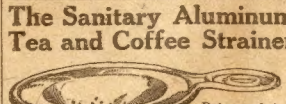

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Tempted Into a Desperate Venture They Found Themselves Battling for Their Lives

A Race for the Wire

By Augustin W. Breeden

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THE six men who rode "night-mob" on the eastern boundary of the Eddie Seven Range, a diminutive west Australian cattle ranch comprising less than 200,000 acres, lay half dozing in the grateful shade of the cook tent. No American cowboys these, with woolly chaps and picturesque speech, but a hard-bitted bunch of bushrangers and world derelicts. And divers they were. Blackie Lowe, a grizzled Australian, with a blue eye that looked clean thru one, an arm that was iron, and a hand that was lightning; Toad Enright, as strong as a rock python and as venomous as a Tasmanian asp—Toad's eyes were close set and glazed over like a rattlesnake's in dog days, and his jaw had an ugly slant to it. Then there were little Cagney, a lovable red-headed, girl-faced fellow who looked like a kid and was a deserter from the French Foreign Legion; Darling, a stalwart Jamaica nigger; Botts, a greasy cockney; and "F. R. S.," called "Fress" for short, who could boast himself black in the face on the subject of his learning. Also at the cook tent were the cook, a mixed Chinese and Moro, and "Slushy," his Japanese helper.

To this mob came, on that blistering December morning, a living mummy, with a face like the Rameses in the Royal Museum, with eyes stone blind from desert sand and sun; his clothing reduced to a tattered loincloth; and in his hand a twenty-pound nugget of pure gold. Imagine the apparition and its effect on this mob. It had come from the east directly out of the rising sun, and neither the two cooks slithering about their morning duties, nor the men lying in the shade and gazing into the blue of the western heavens, saw it till it was in their midst.

Then Toad Enright seized the nugget, whereat the sightless eyes wept horribly and the inarticulate voice yammered like that of a tortured idiot.

"Give it back!" Blackie Lowe's long dexter finger pointed at Enright, and Enright obeyed.

The Pharaoh's mask turned toward Blackie, and the parched lips yammered again, this time in a sort of gurgling gratitude.

In a flash the tiger of gold-lust always sleeping in Australian cattle camps with one eye open, was awake and aprowl.

"Who's boss yere, I want to know!" growled Toad; and Botts whined: "Ay, who's habss? That's wot I saye!"

"I'm camp boss," replied Blackie coldly, "I'eil with the camp boss an' the camp an' the whole Eddie Seven outfit!" shouted Fress. "We're goin' to 'ave that nugget; an' we're goin' to sweat the w'ereabouts o' the field out o' this walkin' stiff yere; or we're goin' to——"

Blackie's left shot to the talkative jaw, and Fress crumpled down and fell asleep with a sigh. But the blow was the signal for a general fight—fists, knives and bludgeons sprang into use. Blackie found himself with two allies—Cagney, the red-headed Foreign Legionary, and the negro, Darling. Cagney could fight well only with his teeth and finger nails, but Darling was a slugger. His fists and feet were like so many sledge hammers. Toad Enright, on the other hand, had for his allies the Jap, the Chino-Moro cook and the cockney, Botts. It was four to three against Blackie and his friends, and the fight was beginning to look like a bloody draw, when the blind mummy turned the tide by striking at the snarling Enright with his twenty-pound nugget and fairly braining the Jamaica nigger instead.

So the mutineers drew off victorious, with the nugget in their possession; and, as the Moro cook had produced a Martini and belt of cartridges from a secret hiding place, Blackie saw fit to let them go. They rifled the grub house of its stores—all they could carry—and likewise the medicine chest, and took the company's ten horses picketed near the camp for the day—and set off in a northeastern direction—a direction in which hearsay said lay one of Australia's richest Eldorados. They heartlessly left the unconscious Fress behind with the enemy.

In the Afternoon They Came Upon the Goldfield—an Australian Desert Placer.

Blackie's first act when they were gone was to minister to the needs of the unfortunate who had caused the stampede. He trickled water and brandy and more water and brandy down the poor fellow's dust-caked throat till he ceased to yammer and fell asleep in the shade of the cook tent. Next he and Cagney looked to Darling's wound and brandied him up till he was able to sit up and ask questions; and lastly they brought Fress to and made him swear an oath of allegiance to them under penalty of death for breaking.

"Make me your captain," said Blackie to the three. "I can take you to the gold if a man jack can come at it." And thereupon they voted the old bushranger their captain.

Blackie took only Cagney into his confidence.

"The first thing to do is to fix to keep the secret from the gang that rides daymob," he said. "To do this we must hide poor Nuggy—" So he nicknamed the unfortunate on the spot. "Any cock-and-bull will account for these cutthroats stealing the stock and making a slope. Meanwhile we'll keep the secret from getting known at headquarters by dividing the night and day force 'alf-an'-'alf and sort o' living on rabbit vermin till we can get organized for the march. Darling can cook and look after Nuggy; I'll ride day and keep Fress close beside me; and you can ride night-mob and watch for surprises."

"And how soon do we start after the gold?" asked Cagney eagerly.

"Soon as Nuggy gets his wits back and we can get its location out of him. We'll have to march afoot, see? If we try to buy stock from the company we'll give the whole game away; and I'm not the man to steal from my boss; neither are you. I know a native tribe not a hundred miles from here, and they're better than horses; they can live off the country."

"Sure to win—your scheme!" enthused Cagney.

"No," corrected Blackie, "highly uncertain. Everything in the bush is uncertain except failure—failure's practically certain."

The trouble began when the men who herded the cattle during the day began to ask numerous embarrassing questions. One and all, they sniffed the air suspiciously—the tiger had one eye open as usual.

"Wot I want to know," insisted Tom Gortleigh, an ex-Klondiker, "wot I want to know is: Wot made Toad Enright an' old Botts run off wi' them two chinks, and wot'd youse fight about?"

"We fought for the company's stock, Gort," replied Blackie. "What that gang of crooks wanted of it I can't say. Enright's been reading penny dreadfuls lately, about atolls full of ambergrease—" Blackie was careful not to mention gold—"and maybe they think they can reach the Bight somehow and set up in the ambergrease business."

The ghost of Gortleigh's suspicions was laid for the moment; and all might have gone well had it not been for a mishap. The mishap was that "Nuggy" died that night without uttering an intelligible syllable. Darling, who was in charge, scooped a grave in the sand and buried the poor fellow in his rags.

"You crazy nigger!" swore Blackie when he heard the story. "Why didn't you send for me when you saw he was about to croak?" Blackie had gone out with the night gang that night to allay suspicion.

"Boss, ah 'reelly didn' know he was so nigh gone. He looked right peart fer a spell, an' then all of a sudden he up an' died."

"Well, you'll ride night-mob in my place tonight," growled Blackie; "you haven't brains enough to do anything else. And listen, you watch Fress like a hawk watches a hare; do you hear?"

That night Blackie stayed behind with the sleeping day crew, and at midnight he dug up the mummy. By the light of a guarded lantern he examined every shred of his clothing. The man was reduced almost to the state he came into the world in; and Blackie learned nothing from his rags.

"Poor Nuggy," he murmured to himself—"poor ole cuss, you went out for the pomp and glory of riches, an' you come back this!"

"What's that mark on his thigh?"

Blackie leaped to his feet and clutched his clasp knife. It was Gortleigh's voice. Gortleigh had suspected and followed Blackie here, and Blackie had sense enough to declare him in.

"Gort," grunted Blackie, "you're on. This thing here rambled into camp yesterday morning with a twenty-pound nugget in its fist. That's what caused the stampede. But it died without talking; and if you and I are to get any o' that gold, we'll have to—hello! There is a mark there on its thigh."

The two men stooped low and examined the peculiar mark. It was tattooed and it read:

10 d m W
m pole 1373

"Wot you make of it?" asked Gortleigh.

"Dam little," muttered Blackie. "Let's wash the beggar and search him for other signs."

They bathed poor "Nuggy" for an hour, but brought nothing further to light.

Then Gortleigh took down the odd tattoo and they reinterred the body. Blackie did not take a copy of the strange inscription; he had it imprinted indelibly on his brain and believed he likewise had guessed its meaning.

"Gort," he said, "we'll start tonight about ten. It'll be us two and Cagney and Fress and the nigger, and we go afoot."

"But Blackie, wot's the use to foot it when there's plenty o' stock?"

"We go afoot," snapped Blackie, "and I go as captain. Listen, I know a tribe of aborigines that'll beat horses to a ha'pense when it comes to carrying. We'll take what chuck is left and what medicines and chemicals we can find here. Are you game, Gort? It's ten to one we'll all wind up like this one here."

"Game's my middle monaker," boasted Gortleigh. "An' as for takin' you for cap'n, wot I say is: I knows a good man w'en I sees him."

They slipped away the next night at ten and trekked across the bush till dawn. They trekked in single file—Blackie, Gortleigh, Darling, Fress and little Cagney. Blackie set the pace; rather he held them back to what their impatience considered a snail's gait. Each man carried two canteens of water, and Darling and Fress carried an extra six gallons swung on a pole between them, while a pole borne by Blackie and Gort carried numerous extra supplies of a sort considered needful. Each man carried a pack, snug and compact. That of Blackie contained besides food, bandages and medicines, four common dry batteries and several yards of copper wire. No one asked Blackie what he wanted with it; they knew he was a man who kept his counsel.

As soon as the hot December sun began to blaze in the coppery sky of the Tropic of Capricorn, they went into camp and remained encamped till sunset. On the second morning at dawn they reached the site of the aborigines' camp, near a "billabong," or water hole; but the aborigines were gone.

"North to the next billabong," said Blackie succinctly. "We'll follow the bloomin' niggers there."

Four nights they trekked northward. The nights were moonlit. They wound amid low acacia hummocks, all sand and thorns; but the footing between the hummocks was for the most part hard and good. On the third night they came upon the trail of Enright's party.

"They might hit the gold field by accident," muttered Blackie.

"We need their horses," growled Gortleigh. "Let's foller 'em."

"No, let's foller the aborigines," put in Cagney.

"Better than horses in this country," added Blackie, and all agreed.

At the second water hole they came upon a gruesome spectacle. Once more they had come upon the trail of Toad Enright, and they recognized his trail by his handiwork. Enright's party had evidently sighted the trekking aborigines and had followed them to the billabong; and there they had ruthlessly murdered them to the last man, woman and child. Enright had doubtless tried to impress them into his service as carriers and had murdered them upon their refusal. The bodies lay scattered and unburied on the sand. The dingoes had been at them, and the sight of their remains was horrible to see.

"Scatter and look for empty cartridges," commanded Blackie. "Darling says that Moro had only about forty. He'll run out after a while."

"Will we take his horses if we catch him?" asked Cagney.

"If we can," replied the leader.

For six nights more they trekked. Blackie was a born bushranger; but once he missed the water hole, and twice they came to the location only to find them dried up. They were completely out of food and even rabbits were getting scarce, so barren was the desert. Here were wastes of land miles upon miles across without a single sprig of vegetation. The land lay flat and hummockless, untouched by rain, unscarped by wind, lifeless and changeless beneath the sun and moon and stars. Two days of this and then they came once more upon the trail of the horsemen. Ten miles up the trail they found a dead horse—a godsend.

"It's old Diamond!" blubbered Cagney with tears in his eyes. Old Diamond had formerly been his mount in herding cattle.

"Help cut him up," snapped Blackie. "We'll cook it when we get to where there's anything to burn."

When they swung out into the trail once more each man was carrying a large ration of horseflesh. They kept the trail of the Toad. Their next sign from the forelopers was not a dead horse, but a dead man. Botts lay in the dust with a bullet hole in his back. At the sight of him Fress began to whimper and weep.

"'E was my matey," he whined; 'an' now they've croaked 'im. 'Ow the bloomin' 'eathens; an' Toad is no better than a 'eathen 'isself!"

They paused in their march and gave the dead man decent burial. Not a word was spoken during the affair. An ominous gloom had settled down upon the whole party. On the march nobody ever spoke but Fress; and he had long since ceased to boast; he only grumbled. The trekkers were getting rather near the riders, but they did not know it. The desert was very deceiving. Beautiful mirages lay upon every side—blue lakes of water fringed by rushes and piles and pointed trees and bordered in places by wonderful cities and towers, always dimly outlined as if seen thru a sort of golden mist.

Then one morning, when the trekkers had made a desperate all night march, at early dawn they sighted the enemy breaking camp to ride away. The horses, which they so much craved, seemed to be wading belly deep in water with their riders upon their backs. It was not a morning mist, but a mirage. Fress went raving mad at the sight; and altho Darling and Blackie tried to hold him he broke away from them and raced away across the desert, outracing even the fleet-footed Darling; and so they had to abandon him to his fate.

That day the party reached its most hopeless state. Cagney, who was never much stronger than a girl, had been coughing for three days from the alkali dust. This day he had a hemorrhage; and the negro, who had never fully recovered from the blow of the nugget, also began to show symptoms of going off his head. Blackie doped him with such medicines as he had and bandaged his head most carefully; but any one could have seen that his case was rapidly becoming hopeless. Blackie loved the darky as he loved poor little Cagney. He had even begun to think a great deal of the rough and ready Klondiker, Gortleigh. Now he said to Gortleigh:

"We must make a forced march tonight and rush those devils at dawn. They've got water, and they've got horses; and water and horses are what we need for those two——" nodding at Darling and Cagney.

"Rushin' men's my middle monaker," grunted Gortleigh.

They came upon the others at dawn. Then they refreshed themselves with the last drops from their canteens, laid their horse meat aside, cut their carrying poles in two for bludgeons, and snaked their way forward almost flat on their faces in the twilight of dawn. They crept forward thus for a mile and then at fifty yards distance leaped to their feet and rushed the sleepers. Even at that the Moro was too quick for them and shot Darling thru the heart. Then Blackie leaped upon him, and the two fought a duel, Blackie with his bludgeon and the Moro with his clubbed Martini. Meanwhile Gortleigh, disregarding Blackie's orders not to commit murder, buried his sheath knife in the Jap's side; and poor little Cagney was left to engage the treacherous Enright single-handed. As the two clinched and Toad was about to break Cagney backward, Gortleigh leaped clear of the dying Jap and brought the point of his knife against Toad's ribs.

"Take our cap'n for your cap'n, er you die!" he shouted. "Knifin' men's my middle monaker!"

"I'll take 'im for my cap'n," panted Toad, just as Blackie by a skilful blow stretched the Moro senseless upon the ground.

"Where's all your horses?" was the first question Blackie asked.

"Two died, two got away, and we killed one to eat; that leaves five," answered Toad.

"Tie the Cookie, here, on the weakest one," commanded Blackie. "Bury Darling and the Jap. There's a horse apiece for the rest of us. Move lively."

Blackie was busy even while he was speaking. He relieved the Jap of his grub bag and the Moro of the nugget which had caused the stampede. It seemed the Moro had been captain of the party, doubtless by virtue of his Martini; the crafty Toad seemed glad to transfer his allegiance to a less remorseless leader.

"It's a forced march to the next billabong," announced Blackie. "If we find that dry, it's the end."

They found the water hole dry and stinking with the musty smell of desiccated rabbits and kangaroos that had died upon its border struggling for the last of the moisture. They buried poor little Cagney on the moistest spot they could find. During the interment the Moro tried to snatch Blackie's knife, and Gortleigh brained him with the nugget.

Three men were left—three Anglo-Saxons. The black, the yellow and the brown were gone. Out of mercy they cut the throats of the two useless horses, now almost dead. Now since Cagney was no more, Blackie decided to take Gortleigh and the Toad into his confidence.

"Somewhere's east of here," he said, "is the Overland Telegraph. Gold or no gold, we must try to reach that wire. I've got here the making of a battery, and if I reach the wire I can call for help from Oodnadatta; tho God only knows if it will ever come. Now I'll tell you something else; according to my understanding that tattoo mark meant 'ten-days trekking west of mile post 1373 of the Overland,' but of course, it might have meant anything else under the sun. And again ten days for Nuggy might be a hundred miles and it might be nearly three hundred. According to my calculation we're now in the general neighborhood that he was referring to. We better scatter a little and trek east toward the wire, keeping our eyes peeled for the gold."

"All right," agreed the other two; and Toad added: "You're the cap'n."

None of the three men thought now of the thirst that was killing them. The lust of gold was in their hearts. All that blistering day they rode east across the burning desert, keeping just within hailing distance of each other. But at night they drew together to camp in each other's company.

"Blackie," whispered Gortleigh as the leader was dozing off to sleep, "that devil, Toad Enright, is plannin' mischief agin you. But never you fear; stayin' awake and protectin' men's my middle name."

The three slept almost in touching distance of each other, each with a riata wrapped about his wrist to keep his horse from escaping. Before noon of the next day the three of them were almost as blind and crazy from sun and thirst as poor Nuggy had been; but in the afternoon they came upon the goldfield—an Australian desert placer like no other placer in the world. Great nuggets lay upon the ground, where the wind thru ten thousand years of blowing had blown all the sand from around them. The nuggets lay on the ground higgledy piggledy like bones upon some prehistoric battlefield. But in one place Nuggy had made a sort of heap of them.

Before this heap the three desperate men knelt down and literally worshiped the gold.

"'Ow's this fer 'igh? Oh, 'ow's this fer 'igh?" Toad Enright kept repeating. And Gortleigh kept saying: "It's got Klondike beat to a ha'pense. It's got Klondike beat. Oh, it's got Klondike beat!"

Then suddenly an evil light gleamed in Toad's snaky eyes, and, seizing a long, heavy nugget, he leaped at Blackie. But Blackie's arm was iron and his hand lightning; and he dodged the blow and whisked the nugget from Toad's hand.

"Don't be a fool, Toad," he muttered between parched, blackened lips. And then to Gortleigh, who was feverishly piling up nuggets, "Man, we must leave here at once and find a water hole, or what good'll all this gold do us? Come on, Toad," he added pleadingly.

The two got to horse.

"Come on, Toad," called Gortleigh. But Toad would not leave the gold. He was piling up nuggets as a child might pile up chips. That evil light had come back into his snaky eyes; so the two rode away and left him.

Ten miles from the spot Gortleigh's horse fell under him and Gortleigh's leg was broken. The horse was too weak to rise again; and Blackie put the wounded man on his own mount and staggered before it, leading it.

"Leave me alone and get out; I'm done for," protested Gortleigh. But Blackie insisted that the two must live or die together.

Blackie was stumbling blindly forward when a whispering premonition told him to look round. He did so just in time to see Gortleigh in the act of thrusting his knife into his own side. Blackie's hand was lightning, and he gave Gortleigh's wrist such a wrench that he dropped the knife to the ground.

"You infernal old fool," growled Blackie. "Thought you'd put yourself out o' the runnin' just for me, eh? And how come I'm a better man than you?"

"I'm done for," sobbed Gortleigh. "It's a shame for you to lose your life for an ole water-logged derelic' like me, and for all that gold to go to waste. Quittin' game's my middle monaker."

"Well, I'm captain," grunted Blackie, "and you do what I say. See?"

In the light of a late rising moon the queer party, two men and a horse, drifted across the desert.

At dawn the sleepy operator at Oodnadatta was awakened by the queerest lot of dots and dashes he had ever heard come over the wire. Finally he made it out. The message said:

"Tapping wire about post 1373. Discov rich placer due w all dead but——"

Here the message suddenly broke off.

"Who are you?" called the operator several times, but there was not another click.

The night man was inclined to regard the matter as a practical joke, but not so the day man. In an hour he had taken steps to have an expedition rushed up the line to post 1373 to rescue whoever might be found there. Blackie and Gort had killed the horse for food some time after tapping the wire; but the exertion had finished them off, and they were unable to eat of his flesh. When the rescue party found them, death had them by the heels; but the rescuers pulled them out by the hair of the head.

A month later Blackie and Gortleigh organized an expedition which opened up the richest placer field found in west Australia since the big strikes in the Coolgardie district. In one spot there was a veritable heap of nuggets, and close beside it was the mummy of Toad Enright. They laid a pipeline six hundred miles long to bring water to the mines; and the gold they took there swelled the British war chest and affected gold points in far away Wall street.

* * *

A Bright Future.

"I want to be honest, sir. I can't support your daughter, but I am afraid to tell her so because she has set her heart on marrying me."

"Never mind. Do your best. I can't support her, either."

FOR THE FLAG

They are dying for the flag in the trenches over there,
They are giving up their lives with the murmur of a prayer,
They are facing gas and sulphur and the huge guns round them roar
In that awful hell of thunder, in that world-wide freedom war.
Are we doing what we should do,
What we could do, for them here;
Are we idling, are we toiling,
Is our purpose plain and clear?

They are dying for the flag every day 'mid battle's rune,
And we sit here talking programs who should play a different tune,
Who should waste no precious moment doing all that should be done,
For that brother over yonder, for that father and that son.
Are we doing it? Let's ask it
Till the answer can be made,
And the lads we love have answered
Every sally, every raid.

They are dying for the flag on the seas that suck them down,
They are dying for the flag when the airships bomb a town;
They are dying over there for the flag they fight to save,
They are dying that their flag till eternity may wave.
Are we helping, are we fighting
To send over all they need?
Are we backing them or slacking?
Is it words with us, or deed?

They are dying for the flag in the trenches of Lorraine;
Are they dying for it wisely, are they dying but in vain?
Are we answering as we should do our own call to duty here,
That the lives they give for freedom may exalt the world and cheer?
Let us answer every question
That the high hour asks today
With our sacrifice and service
For those boys so far away.

—FOLGER MCKINSEY.

Starting a Three-part Story of Intrigue and Strange Happenings in a Great Mine

Utterly Terrified, Struggling, Cursing, the Miners Fought to Gain Their Way Beyond the Pall of Suffocating Vapor.

In the Sign of the Purple Dagger

By J. Willard Lincoln

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CHAPTER I.

THE MYSTERIOUS GAS BOMB.

"GET back! Get back! Hell's breaking loose."

Two strong voices roared out the startling words, but the hundred or more miners gathered about the mouth of shaft No. 4 of the Central Coal Company's mines did not heed them. Curiosity and long association with the presence of sudden death vied with each other and curiosity won. Instead of backing away they surged toward the shaft, eager to see who had bellowed out the warning and the reason.

In the semi-darkness of the early winter morning the features of the two men who sprang from the bucket to the landing boards at the mouth of the shaft were not distinguishable and the miners pressed forward to identify them.

"Get back! Get back!" and the two men turned toward the miners, and waved their arms violently. The words were followed by a muffled roar and from the mouth of the shaft a heavy, bluish vapor spouted, geyser-like, some thirty feet above the ground, then settled back.

And as the cloud engulfed the terrified men grouped about the shaft of the coal mine, they were seized with violent attacks of sneezing and coughing.

"It's the fumes of hell!" shrieked a voice.

Utterly terrified, struggling, cursing, scarcely able to breathe and partially blinded, the miners fought to gain their way beyond the pall of suffocating vapor.

Coupled with the semi-darkness, the vapor caused them to lose the sense of direction.

Several, in their mad scramble to reach fresh air, dashed directly towards the shaft.

As they stepped off into space and the realization came to them that they were doomed to fall the three hundred feet, the depth of the shaft from the surface of the earth to the bottom of the mine, they shrieked in horror.

Loud above the sneezing and coughing rose the terrified wails and, as they fell upon the ears of the other men, they added to the panic.

No need was there to tell the others what had happened. Many fearing that they, too, might lose their sense of direction, dropped to their knees, preferring the chance against death from the strange and racking vapor to the certainty of a frightful end if they stepped off into the shaft.

The shrieks of agony and terror had carried to the miners going to their work in the other shafts of the coal company, and these men rushed to learn the cause. As they met those of the day shift in No. 4 who had been fortunate enough to make their way beyond the pall of sickening vapor, they stopped, anxiously inquiring the reason for the shrieking and flight.

None of the terror-stricken fugitives, however, was able to give any explanation, but their imaginations were keenly active and, in a trice, the wildest stories were being passed from group to group of the men who made their living by digging coal in the bowels of the earth.

Quickly the more venturesome of the miners assigned to the other shafts made their way to the haze-engulfed mouth of No. 4, eager to learn for themselves the effects of the mysterious vapor.

For most of them one inhalation was enough and, coughing, sneezing and sputtering, they backed away until they were certain they had solid ground beneath their feet, when they turned and fled precipitately.

Memory of the words of warning uttered by the men no one had seemed to recognize, followed so quickly by the rumble of the explosion and the spouting forth from the mine shaft of the discomforting vapor, cast a spell of mystery over the startling incidents and struck terror to the hearts of the miners.

And as the wild rumors carried to the homes of the men, wives, sweethearts and children poured forth from the little wooden company houses, quickly joining the groups about the mouth of No. 4 and by their presence still further increasing the terror and panic.

One thing, however, the miners agreed upon despite their fright, and agreed upon without delay—not one of them would go down into any mine of the Central Coal Company until the mystery had been explained.

CHAPTER II.

A DISCOURAGING PROSPECT.

JUST as word of the amazing happenings at the mouth of No. 4 had reached the miners about to descend into the other shafts and to the women folks farther away in their homes, so it reached the superintendent at his house and the clerks on duty at the mine offices.

Unable to make head or tail out of the incoherent statements, the superintendent rushed to his telephone and rang frantically for the shaft boss who should have been in the shanty at the mouth of No. 4.

There was no answer.

Thinking that the boss of No. 4 might be out among his panic-stricken men, the superintendent grabbed his hat and coat and hurried to the scene of the trouble.

Arrived there, he found that the pall of mysterious vapor had all but disappeared. But while the physical discomforts of the miners were banished, their mental upset remained. The fact that no one had recognized the men who gave the warning and that no one had offered any explanation of the nature of the mist cloud that had caused them to sneeze and cough gave a suggestion of the supernatural and left them in a state of panic with which it was more difficult to deal than if they had been confronted with tangible evidences of the cause.

As the tall broad-shouldered form of the superintendent was recognized by the miners, their excited jabberings suddenly ceased and they silently opened out, making a pathway to the mouth of the shaft at No. 4.

Now Horace Porter, the superintendent, knew coal mines and he knew coal miners. Indeed, it was because of his intimate knowledge of both that he had been placed in charge of the seven coal mines which formed the property of the Central Coal Company.

And his knowledge of the miners told him that their very silence at his approach was more ominous than any hysterical outburst from them would have been. For when coal miners are confronted by concrete facts such as the collapse of a shoring, the spread of firedamp or any of the other catastrophes that are of common occurrence when the men are working in the levels hundreds of feet below the surface of the earth, experience has taught them what to do. They know they are dealing with tangible reality, and tho their grief may be deep, or their passions mightily aroused, they can understand the situation. But let anything savor of the supernatural, and instantly men, women and even children become nervous and panicky. Superstition seizes them and their credulity can be played upon to work them into any sort of excesses, or the commission of any sort of crime, by unscrupulous agitators.

It was this silence of the miners, the absence of any cursing, shouting and fighting that told Porter he had to deal with a most serious situation.

As he approached nearer to the shaft and realized from the number of men standing about that the gangs from the other mines had not gone to work, he

drove his hands viciously into the pockets of his overcoat.

The Central Coal Company had a Government contract. Its output went entirely to a plant where heavy ordnance for the American Expeditionary Forces in France was being made. The fuel demands of this gun company were heavy and consumed the maximum output of the seven shafts of the Central company.

Owing to the severity of the weather and the heavy snowfall great difficulties had been experienced by the concern in obtaining sufficient cars to transport the coal mined.

As a result of this car shortage, the ordnance company was making strong protests to the authorities at Washington, and a hint already had been sent to the Central company that, unless its production and deliveries increased without delay, war emergency would necessitate the revocation of the contract.

Porter, however, and the other officials of the coal company knew that the car shortage was due to a deliberate determination on the part of the railroad company so seriously to hinder deliveries to the ordnance concern that the Central company would be forced out of business. The fight between the railroad and the owners of the coal mines was of long standing. But despite the tricks to which the railroad had resorted the coal concern had managed to continue its existence.

The contract for the supplying of the ordnance company had changed uncertainty to assurance. Its successful fulfillment would put enough money in the treasury of the coal company to enable it to build a railway of its own, which would furnish connection with another transcontinental system, and thus take it forever out of jeopardy from its long-standing enemy.

During the tie-up caused by blizzards, which had piled the snow high upon the railroad tracks, the reserve pile of coal at the ordnance plant had dwindled to barely enough to keep the furnaces going for a three-day period. As a result, it was necessary for each day's output from the coal mine to be rushed forward without delay.

The knowledge of these conditions, together with the memory of the none too gentle hint of the authorities at Washington, caused Porter to realize that the defection of the miners was of the very greatest moment.

He knew from experience that it would be impossible to get them into the mines that day, and unless he could get at the bottom of the occurrences and explain them clearly to the miners, he realized that it would be impossible to get them to descend the shafts for days to come.

And on top of this was the knowledge that the reserve supply at the ordnance plant was sufficient for only three days and that it was so far removed from the coal mine that twenty-four hours were required for delivery, even when the railroad service was the most perfect.

Accordingly, it was with heavy heart that Porter put his hand on the latch of the door leading into the mine boss' shanty.

To his amazement the door failed to yield to his pressure.

Twice he tried it, then shook it angrily, at the same time calling, "Let me in, Jim! It's Porter."

But no response did the superintendent receive.

CHAPTER III.

"IN THE SIGN OF THE PURPLE DAGGER."

AS THE superintendent had approached the door of the mine boss' shanty, the miners had crowded forward, eager to hear what he might have to say.

With widening eyes they had seen him try the door, only to find it locked, and had heard him shout his hail to the man they knew as "Big Jim," and demand admittance.

And when they realized that the door had not been opened in response to Porter's demand, they pressed expectantly forward, conscious that a new turn of events impended.

Waiting only a moment after he had demanded admittance, the superintendent whirled upon the excited group of miners.

"Anybody seen Big Jim?" he asked, gruffly.

No voice, however, made reply.

"You men, who were going down in No. 4 this morning, didn't any of you see Big Jim?" Porter shouted, sweeping his glance over the upturned faces.

"He wasn't around," some one replied.

Such a thing as the mine boss not being on hand when his men were descending to their day's work was an occasion only to be excused by the direst necessity.

To the superintendent the answer was alarming.

"When was the last time any of you did see Big Jim?" he asked.

One, two, three moments he waited for a reply, but none came, and he snapped, "Answer me! When was the last time any of you saw Big Jim?"

"I seen him about 10 o'clock last night," piped a shrill voice.

Miners and superintendent alike turned toward a stunted, ill-nourished little girl, who stood some twenty feet from the mine boss' shanty.

Terrified by the notice her statement had attracted to her, the child tried to worm her way among the miners. But before she had succeeded, several hands seized her and she was passed from one to another until she arrived before the superintendent, even as he was exclaiming, "Bring that child up here."

As the poor little creature found herself face to face with the man whom everybody in the settlement surrounding the mines considered their god, for in his hands lay their very existence, she buried her face in her hands and began to sob violently.

"There, there," said Porter reassuringly, "you mustn't cry." And gently drawing the child's hands from her face, he stooped down, until his eyes were on a level with hers, and said, in a quiet voice, "Now tell me all about your seeing Big Jim."

But in the presence of the man who ruled over the settlement, the child was dumb.

"Tell me, was Jim going to his house or leaving it?" asked Porter, when he realized the little girl would not talk of her own accord.

Sensing developments even more startling than any which had yet occurred, the men and women pressed forward, eager to catch every word the child might utter.

"He was going," replied the girl.

"Which way?" asked Porter.

"Fast, he was running."

"I mean, in which direction was he going, north, south, east or west?" explained the superintendent.

"He was coming toward No. 4."

At the answer a murmur ran thru the crowd of miners.

"How do you know that?" asked Porter, and then, when the child failed to make any response, he added, "I mean where were you that you could tell Big Jim was coming toward No. 4?"

The little girl, however, only hung her head and nervously poked the ground with her foot.

"Don't be afraid," soothed Porter. "This is very important. It will affect every man, woman and child at these mines. No harm will come to you for telling me where you were, I promise you that. It is simply necessary that I know so that I can decide what to do."

As the crowd of miners and their women folk sensed the import of the superintendent's words, they ceased their jabberings and waited in expectant silence for the child's answer.

For several moments, however, she said nothing, still holding her head down and poking at the earth with her foot.

Firmly but gently, Porter placed his hand under the child's chin and raised her head.

"Tell me," he said in kindly tones, "where were you when you saw Big Jim?"

"I was looking for father."

"But what would your father be doing here at No. 4 at 10 o'clock at night?" the superintendent asked, his surprise at the answer evident in his voice.

"That's Spider Kusick," announced a woman, pushing herself to the front line of the group surrounding Porter and the child. "Her ma died last January. Since then her pa has been drinkin', something awful. There's four more at home beside Spider. Yesterday Long Louie, that's her pa, got some money, somewhere, so I s'pose he got to drinkin' again and the Spider was lookin' for him so she could get a little of the money to feed those other four mouths before it was all gone."

"Is that right?" asked Porter, his voice gentle as he turned from the woman who had volunteered the information concerning the unfortunate little family, to the child.

The Spider nodded her head.

"But what made your father come toward No. 4?" asked the superintendent.

The question, however, was one which the child was unable to answer, and, realizing the futility of trying to get her to do so, Porter changed the subject, saying: "You told me when you saw Big Jim he was running."

The child nodded.

"How near to him were you?"

"He went right by me."

For an instant the poor stunted little bit of humanity looked into the face of the big powerful man beside her and what she read in the eyes that were looking steadily into hers seemed to reassure her.

With a hawk-like movement she thrust her hand into the front of her little calico dress and pulled out a bit of paper, saying as she extended it to the superintendent, "Big Jim dropped this as he went by me."

With nervous fingers Porter smoothed out the crumpled bit of paper while all about men and women rose on their tiptoes and craned their necks in an effort to see what was transpiring.

For an instant after he had smoothed out the wrinkled scrap the superintendent of the Central Coal mines stared at it.

Near the top was an unintelligible scrawl, but below it were the words, "In the sign of the Purple Dagger."

CHAPTER IV.

"LONG LOUIE."

DUMFOUNDED, Porter stared at the crumpled bit of paper with its sinister signature.

"The purple dagger, the purple dagger," he repeated to himself, under his breath. "Sounds like some black hand society." His face grew even more serious and he exclaimed in a voice that was little more than a mumble, "I wonder if it could be——"

Checking himself as he became aware that the throng of excited men and women were pressing about him still closer in an effort to scrutinize the bit of paper, Porter stood up and, throwing out his hands, shouted, "Stand back and keep your distance!"

Crouching as tho struck with a lash, the miners and their women folk slunk back.

Beckoning to the Spider, the superintendent again stooped that he might converse with her the better.

"Is there anything more you can tell me about Big Jim or your father?" he inquired.

But the ill-nourished little waif only shook her head.

"Did you read this?" he asked, and holding out the paper before her in his left hand he tapped it with his right forefinger.

Drawing back as tho the writing were an apparition of evil, the Spider stared with wide eyes at the soiled, crumbled bit of paper and then grunted, "Uh-uh."

"Do you know what it means?" Porter inquired eagerly and to an older person his tone would have suggested that the question was of vital import.

To the child, however, it was but another of the string of questions being asked her and, in her desire to bring the catechising to a speedy conclusion, she shrewdly decided that her end could best and quickest be obtained by an assumption of ignorance, so she muttered a sullen "No!"

The superintendent, however, was a sufficiently keen student of human nature to know that the child was not telling the truth. Indeed, her manner told him that she probably knew a great deal, if not all, about the terrifying threat contained in the words, "the purple dagger."

He likewise realized that the place and surroundings were not conducive to the imparting of any information the Spider might have and he was wondering how he might win her confidence and get her to accompany him some place where they might talk undisturbed, when there was a sudden parting of the crowd and a disheveled, uncouth figure lurched toward the steps of the mine boss' shanty where the superintendent and the little girl were standing.

"Long Louie!" gasped several of the miners, and like the rumble of distant thunder the murmur swept thru the crowd.

As the man and child on the steps caught the words they looked up and the sight that met their eyes was not inviting.

Tall beyond the ordinary, as his nickname implied, the man looked like an animated clothes pin. His little bullet-shaped head was thrust forward and the legs in his rum-bleared eyes, together with the mottled growth of stubble on his cheeks and chin, gave him an appearance that was anything but pleasing.

Instinctively the child drew back and finally dodged behind Porter, being almost hidden by the folds of his great coat, while the superintendent straightened up and leaned slightly forward to be ready for any move the obviously drunken miner might make.

"Whacha doin' with that gal?" demanded Long Louie, stopping at the foot of the steps and thrusting his face aggressively toward the superintendent.

For the moment Porter was minded to order the drunken good-for-nothing about his business, but he quickly realized that, in view of the startling incidents of the morning and the mood of the miners, it would not do to show any stress of authority until he had got to the bottom of the causes. So he replied, "I was just asking your daughter some questions."

"Asking my daughter questions, eh?" repeated Long Louie, rocking back and forth on his feet. "What about?"

"About Big Jim."

The mention of the boss of mine No. 4 had a startling effect upon the leering, staggering creature who stood at the foot of the steps at the shanty.

In an instant the effect of the rum he had consumed seemed to vanish. A tremor ran thru his body and he straightened himself up.

"What about Jim?" he asked, in a voice that was heavy with emotion.

All the incidents in the change in the man standing before him had been noted by Porter, but he gave no evidence of the fact and merely said, "That's what I want to know. What about him?"

In answer, however, Long Louie simply glowered.

Realizing that he was wasting valuable time, Porter suddenly produced the crumpled piece of paper.

"Did you ever see that?" he demanded, holding it out toward Long Louie.

At the sight the miner's eyes narrowed.

"Where did you get it?" he countered.

Just as he was on the point of telling, Porter felt a tug at his overcoat and instead of making any reply he inquired, "Can you read?"

"No," growled Long Louie.

"Then I'll read it to you. It says, 'In the sign of the purple dagger.'"

As the words reached the crowd of miners and their women folk, a gasp as of terror swept over them and hastily the women, children and even men crossed themselves.

CHAPTER V.

PORTER MAKES A DISCOVERY.

AS PORTER beheld the invocation of the universally recognized protection against evil, he was amazed.

Apparently he, who had prided himself upon being close to the miners and their families who formed the settlement about the shafts of the Central Coal Company, and on knowing what was going on among them, was the only one in the little hamlet who had not heard of the "purple dagger," and who was in ignorance of its significance. Obviously, it was something evil, and the mine superintendent then and there decided that he would find out all about it without delay.

But even as he came to this determination he noticed that the throng of men, women and children, which scarce a moment before had pressed so expectantly about him, was drifting away, and the sight galvanized him into action.

"You, Long Louie, stay here with me," he commanded.

The miner, however, had no desire to be subjected to the searching examination he knew the superintendent would give him, and turned on his heel. But before he could put his flight into execution, Porter laid a heavy hand on his shoulder.

"No, you don't," he snapped. "I told you to come with me and you're coming." And to further insure obedience, the superintendent shifted his hold from the miner's shoulder to the collar of his coat.

Came a whir of arms and before Porter realized what was going on, he found himself holding an empty coat, which but a moment before had covered the back of Long Louie. For with a suddenness of movement which showed he was a past master in the trick, the miner had whipped his arms out of the sleeves and freed himself from the hold of the superintendent.

Mocking jeers rose from some of the women who had witnessed the agile escape, but they were quickly silenced by wiser heads among the crowd, which, as if by magic, suddenly melted away.

Angered at being thus outwitted and made ridiculous in the eyes of the men and women whom he had often found it necessary to rule with an iron hand, Porter threw the coat on the ground, turned and again placed his hand on the latch of the door, which led into the shanty of the mine boss.

As before, the door refused to open to his touch and, stepping back to give himself more power, he threw his shoulder against the wooden panel.

With a cracking and snapping of wood as the lock gave way under the weight of Porter's body, the door flew open.

Eagerly, yet fearing the sight he might see within, for it had occurred to the superintendent that Big Jim might have met foul play, Porter glanced about the confines of the little wooden building.

Everything was in order, however, and was apparently just as it had been left when the mine boss had locked up at the close of work on the day before. No sign or sight was there of Big Jim.

Instinctively the superintendent heaved a sigh of relief at finding his fears as to the safety of one of his most trusted subordinates groundless, at least insofar as to the finding of his body in the shanty.

Desirous of collecting his thoughts that he might get at the bottom of the mysterious occurrences of the morning and discover the identity of the sinister "purple dagger," Porter pushed the door shut and dropped into the chair which stood before Big Jim's crude desk.

Scarcely had he seated himself when the door flew open and in came three of his other mine bosses, "Redtop" Sweeney, from No. 7; "Lefty" Jones, from No. 1, and "Handsome Walker," from No. 2.

Hurriedly they glanced about as tho looking for their pal, the boss of No. 4, and their surprise at not seeing him with the superintendent at a time of such crisis was evidenced in Redtop's blurted question, "Where's Big Jim?"

"I wish I knew," responded Porter.

At the reply, the three men from the other shafts glanced at one another hurriedly, but not so hurriedly that the action escaped the now thoroly alert superintendent.

"See here, there are things going on in this mining camp that I don't know anything about," Porter exclaimed. "Apparently I am the only man who doesn't. Now I want you to tell me what's up.

"For the time being because things are in a bad mess, I'm going to overlook the fact that you all have neglected your duty in not telling me whatever this thing is that is causing the unrest among the miners. Just at present, we have got to restore the confidence of these people and get them back into the mines. When that's done——"

"We're more likely to be angels," interrupted Handsome.

"That's right," chimed in Lefty. "I don't believe you could get one of the diggers to go down into a Central mine today for a million dollars."

"Why not?" demanded Porter.

Again there was an exchange of

glances between the mine bosses, as tho they were debating whether or not it was best to tell the truth to their superintendent, but before they came to any decision, the door again swung open and in tramped the three remaining bosses, "One-eyed" Lewis, from No. 5; "Tiny" Peters, from No. 3, and "Subway" Brown, from No. 6.

"Glad you've come," announced Porter, as the newcomers moved sheepishly to convenient seats. "Saves me the trouble of sending for you. I'll just tell you what I've been saying to the others. I want to know what's wrong with the Central miners. I want to know who it is that is stirring up trouble. I want to know how we can get these men back into the mines so that our coal production won't be delayed more than twelve hours. I——"

"Which can't be done," grunted Subway. "There's only one thing that would send them down our shafts."

"What's that?" demanded Porter.

"Instructions from the Purple Dagger."

At the mention of this name which evidently exerted some powerful sway over the miners in the little settlement, the other mine bosses shifted uneasily. Some of them even cast furtive glances about, as tho fearing there might be some one lurking to overhear what was said in the shanty of No. 4.

"So, you know about the Purple Dagger, too, do you?" the superintendent inquired in a voice that was like chilled steel with its incisiveness, and then glancing at the others, he added, "and I suppose the rest of you do too."

Five heads nodded in answer.

"What is it?" he demanded.

"That's what we'd all like to know," returned Subway, who had constituted himself spokesman for the others.

"I suppose it's some sort of a Black Hand society," declared the superintendent.

"Black Hand or Pink Hand, it's got them buffaloed," growled One-eyed Lewis. "Why, if you told some of them to kill their wives and kiddies and said it was 'in the sign of the purple dagger,' they'd do it without batting an eye."

CHAPTER VI.

PORTER RECEIVES AN ULTIMATUM.

UNWILLING to let his subordinates understand the shock their very limited revelations were to him, Porter managed to make his face expressionless as he said:

"So I imagine. But I don't think there is so much danger of the Purple Dagger ordering the men to kill their families, as there is of their telling them to kill you and me and our families.

"But there is no use of wasting time on that. You men, of course, know that you've done wrong in trying to keep this thing from me. The only way you can square yourselves with me is by being perfectly frank now in answering my questions truthfully, no matter what facts may be developed.

"Now, with that understanding we'll get down to business. If any of you are unwilling to abide by such an agreement, the thing to do is for you to get out of this shanty right now, and out of the property owned by the Central Coal Company just as fast as the Lord will let you. I won't stand for any treachery. Just bear that in mind."

As the superintendent ceased speaking he looked from one to another of his mine bosses as tho pledging them with his eye. To his great satisfaction, each of the six men met his gaze frankly and with an expression on their faces and in their eyes that promised him loyalty and support, even to the very death.

"Good," said he, when he had finished his silent interrogatory of the men. "Now we're all set. You all know what happened this morning at No. 4. That is, you all know what happened above ground," he hastily corrected. "What caused the geyser of smoke, none of us knows yet, altho, of course, it is obvious that it was some sort of gas bomb similar to those which are being used on the fields of France.

"It is also obvious that the members of the sign of the Purple Dagger had a hand in the explosion of that gas bomb.

"Big Jim, as I suppose you all have heard by this time, is missing. He wasn't at his shanty this morning, and the last trace of him I've been able to get so far is from Spider Kusick, Long Louie's oldest girl."

At the mention of the poor, stunted child and her drunken father, the mine bosses exchanged significant glances.

"Spider told me," continued Porter, without appearing to notice the action of his subordinates, "that while she was looking for her father at about 10 o'clock last night, she saw Big Jim running past his shanty here, and that just as he went by her he dropped this paper." And from the right hand pocket of his great coat Porter drew forth the crumpled piece of paper given him by Spider Kusick.

Again smoothing it out, the superintendent handed it to Subway Brown, who glanced at the fateful signature "in the Sign of the Purple Dagger" and without comment passed it on to his neighbor, from whom, in turn, it went to all the others in the shanty. Porter silently waited until the soiled and much crumpled strip was returned to him. Then he exclaimed: "There are three things for us to turn our attention to at once. The first is to find Big Jim; the second is to learn who set off the gas bomb and how it was done, and the third is to ascertain the identity of these devils who used the sign of the Purple Dagger."

"Some order," growled Redtop. "Why don't you put the finishing touch on by telling us to go to Berlin and get the Kaiser? You——"

As the words fell upon the ears of the men assembled in the little shanty they could scarce believe them, and they looked at the utterer in amazement.

To Porter they came like a dash of cold water in the face.

Straightening in his chair, there shone in his eyes a look which boded ill to the boss of No. 7.

"See here, Redtop," he said sharply, "that's the second time you've said something that doesn't sound right to me. And I tell you it's going to be the last time!

"I may be doing you an injustice, but things are too serious to take any chances. You are eliminated entirely from taking any part in this investigation."

A Blow From Behind Felled Him, and He Sank to the Floor.

A look of cunning flashed in the eyes of the boss of No. 7 for an instant—but that instant was long enough for the look to be noted by the superintendent. And the result was concrete proof of the reason that he had been put in charge of the mines when the situation of the concern was so precarious. But as the nothing had happened, he continued: "And until our investigation is concluded, the mystery cleared up and the men who are at the bottom of it securely lodged behind the bars, you are out of a job and will be deprived of your liberty."

The statement seemed to stun the other mine bosses. That is, all except the man against whom it was directed, for with a catlike movement the erstwhile boss of No. 7 sprang towards the door.

Porter, however, had anticipated such action and even as he finished the words which meant at least temporary imprisonment for Redtop, he had leaped toward him, and before Redtop could gain the door, had pinioned him in his arms.

"Get a rope," the superintendent commanded.

Redtop, however, was determined not to lose his liberty without a struggle. Raising his foot, he employed the thug trick of stamping on the instep. And as he brought his heel down upon Porter's right ankle, striking the nerve, the superintendent relaxed his grip because of the excruciating pain.

As he felt the vise-like arms release their tension about his body, the former boss of No. 7 whirled, at the same time drawing up his arm for a punch.

But before he could deliver it there was a crunching sound and he sank to the floor, while blood spurted from his head from the wound made by a wrench which Subway had wielded with all his strength.

Quickly the other bosses brought a rope and while the former boss of No. 7 was still unconscious from the blow he had received, he was trussed hand and foot.

"It's sure a pleasure to do this, you snake!" exclaimed Handsome as he gave an unnecessarily vicious tug to the knot he had tied about Redtop's ankle. And the murmur of agreement that rose from the others told Porter more eloquently than words that they agreed in the sentiment.

"If you suspected Redtop, why didn't you tell me?" the superintendent asked, looking from one to another of his loyal bosses.

"Because we ain't tale bearers and trouble makers," said One-eyed Lewis.

"But if you had any just grounds for suspicion of him, it was your duty to tell me," returned Porter.

"We was hoping to get the goods on him first," interposed Tiny Peters.

"It's my opinion, he's the high monkey monk in that Purple Dagger crowd," asserted Lefty.

"Now, what's the use of going into that?" objected Subway. "I've told you time and again, he ain't. It's that Kaiser-looking fellow from Chicago who is the big boss. But I ain't denying Redtop was his right hand, and a pretty husky right hand, too."

The words of his subordinates filled Porter with amazement, but before he could ask them any questions which would clear up the situation, the telephone bell rang.

Picking up the instrument, the superintendent was told that he had been called on long distance. It was the president of the ordnance company that was turning out the guns for the American Expeditionary Forces on the wire, and his statement was curt:

"We have had no coal from you for thirty-six hours. The railroad reports a wreck in which ten carloads of your coal were dumped down the embankment at Airview. Our reserve supply will last just forty-eight hours more. If we do not receive coal from you by tomorrow night, we shall notify Washington and make arrangements with some fuel company that can live up to its contract in making deliveries. I don't want to hear any explanations or excuses. You will either get the coal here or lose the contract!"

And the click of the receiver being snapped on its hook told Porter that the president of the ordnance company would not listen to reason or show any leniency.

CHAPTER VII.

MORE STARTLING NEWS.

COMING as it did on top of the series of unusual and soul-trying events of the early morning, the threat to withdraw the contract for supplying coal by the president of the concern was a staggering blow to Porter.

Altho the president had not told him the exact spot at Airview where had occurred the wreck which had sent his ten cars of coal hurtling down the embankment, the superintendent of the Central mines was sufficiently familiar with the lay of the land to believe that the catastrophe had happened where the roadbed of the railway made a sharp turn. And he believed as surely as tho he had been told that the wrecking of the freight train, of which the coal cars formed a part, had been deliberate.

Whether, however, this act of sabotage had been performed by the men working under the Sign of the Purple Dagger or at the instigation of the railway officials, who were now more keen than ever to obtain the control of the Central coal mines, he was at a loss to determine. Possibly, he told himself, both agencies might be working together for the industrial destruction of the coal company. In the event that the railroad company was taking an active part in the conspiracy to wrest the contract for supplying the ordnance company from the Central, Porter knew that the task before him of getting coal to the concern before evening of the next day, in accordance with the president's ultimatum, would be nigh, if not actually, impossible.

As he contemplated the difficulties confronting him, the superintendent slunk down in his chair.

"What now?" inquired Subway, with an interest and freedom that he felt his saving of Porter's life when he had been attacked by Redtop gave him.

And there was no tone of resentment in the superintendent's voice as he outlined briefly the situation confronting the Central Coal Company and repeated the ultimatum he had just received by telephone.

As the mine bosses heard the gravely momentous words, the serious expressions that settled upon their faces evidenced that they appreciated the enormity of the task of overcoming the obstacles.

A moment there was silence, then One-eyed Lewis coughed deprecatingly.

"About this here railroad wreck," he exclaimed. "Just when did it happen?"

"I don't know," replied Porter.

"Seems funny to me, the railroad didn't report it to the mines here," exclaimed Subway. "You'd think doing a little thing like dumping ten carloads of a person's coal down a forty-foot embankment would stack up big enough to tell 'em about."

"It would for any road but the X. & Y.," growled One-eyed Lewis. "That outfit is so ornery mean that they wouldn't oil the engines if they thought the wheels would go round without their doing it."

"They probably telephoned the main offices in Chicago," said Porter.

"Supposin' they did, ain't it funny the big boss in Chicago hasn't notified us?" asked Subway.

The expressions on the faces of the men in the shanty at the mouth of shaft No. 4 gave sufficient answer.

Yet had the men at the mines of the Central Coal Company known the real situation they would have been even more astounded.

"But this ain't answering my question," exclaimed One-eyed Lewis. "What I want to know is just when they dumped them cars."

"I'll find out," said Porter, taking up the telephone instrument, into which he commanded, "Give me the division traffic manager's office at Boxville."

As the mine superintendent patiently awaited the connection, the door suddenly swung open and in burst one of the clerks from the chief office, Harry Lester.

"Telephone lines been cut!" he exclaimed.

"But I just talked to the ordnance company at Hopton," declared Porter.

"I know it," Lester returned. "But when I tried to get the railroad office at Boxville to ask where the cars were they promised today, I couldn't raise anybody."

"While I was fiddling with the telephone and cussing Central out, Long Louie came in.

"For a moment he watched me and then burst out laughing. 'You'll get hoarse callin' Central,' he laughed.

"'Why?' I asked.

"'Because the wire has been cut, you poor fool,' he jeered. 'And I'll tell you somethin' else, too,' he added. 'The bridge over Little Bear Crick is down, so there ain't no way of getting any messages out or cars in to the Central Coal Company's mines.'

"At first I thought Long Louie was just drunk, as he didn't have his coat on. But the way he spoke the name of our company made me look at him closer. That look was enough to tell me there was something wrong. So I came right over here to tell you."

"Where is Long Louie now?" demanded Porter, getting to his feet.

"As I left the office I heard him tell-

ing Simpson he wanted what money was coming to him."

"You all wait here until I get back," ordered the superintendent, as he started toward the door with the evident intention of going to the chief office to interview the man who had so cleverly outwitted him a short time before.

"If you please, boss," exclaimed One-eyed Lewis, stepping in ahead of him, "Long Louie belongs to No. 5. I know him pretty well and I reckon it would do more good for me to see him than for you." And without waiting to hear whether his superior objected or not, the boss of shaft No. 5 hastened from the shanty.

As the man disappeared thru the door Porter turned to the others.

"This destruction of the Central's property has got to stop—even if we have to shoot every miner in the settlement," he said. "There must be some of them who are loyal. I used to think I knew something about this camp, but from what has happened this morning, I seem to have been mistaken." And he smiled a bit ruefully.

"If there are any miners who are loyal you men must know them," he went on. "I wish you, Tiny and Handsome and Lefty, would go out and round them up. Tell them to be at the chief office in two hours, that will be 9 o'clock," he added, looking at his watch.

"In the meantime, Subway and I will look after Redtop here."

Quickly the men designated set out on their mission.

"What are you going to do with Redtop?" inquired the boss of No. 6. "He is awake. I seen him open his eyes a couple of times."

For several seconds the superintendent pondered the problem, then his face suddenly broke into a smile as he exclaimed:

"We'll put him in a bucket and lower him down No. 4. That will test out the gas and show whether there is enough left to do any harm."

"That's a good idea," chuckled Subway. "If it kills him, it'll show it ain't safe to go down. If it don't, it will mean we can. And I sure do want to get down to the bottom of No. 4 and see what has been going on."

Thus agreed upon their plan of action, the superintendent and the boss of No. 6 picked up the tied and roped Redtop, preparatory to putting the scheme into effect, when they were startled by the crash of glass and a thump upon the floor.

Turning—and letting their captive drop as they did so—the two men beheld a bolt about three inches long to which was attached a piece of paper, lying at their feet.

Picking it up, Porter quickly smoothed out the paper and with difficulty, because of the spelling and cramped writing, made out the following message:

"Ser ser, Mr. Porter, if you want to find Big Jim, be at the camp near Bear Creek and No. 1 at noon. Do jest as you are told. A FREND."

Is the situation complicated enough for you? Strange things already have happened in this story, but others are to happen before the end and solution of the Purple Dagger come in sight. The story will be continued next week.

A Modest Title.

"I WOULD like, sah, to get off this afternoon to attend a funeral," said Sam to his white employer.

"Sorry, but I need you badly today. I'm afraid you can't get away. No relative is it?"

"No suh—hit's a lodge funeral an' I'm obliged to be there. See, I'm one of the officers and I just natcherally got to."

"Are you one of the high officers?"

"No suh, no suh. I'm just one of the low officers. I reckon I'm just about the lowest officer in the whole lodge—scarcely any officer at all."

"Well, what officer are you?" the employer asked.

"Oh, I'm just one of the disimportant ones; I'm nothin' but the Most Sublime King."

Didn't Know the First One.

A TRAVELING man just arrived from San Jose, Cal., tells this one on the city. While standing on the corner of the street that serves for San Jose's Broadway he observed a very pious little man emerge from out of the crowd, evidently from out of town like himself, and very timidly approach a native and ask, "My good man, could you tell me the whereabouts of the Second Baptist Church?" Whereupon the native laid a hand upon the little man's shoulder and in genuine surprise exclaimed: "Why, God bless you, I didn't know there was even a first one, much less a second."

Not Quite Sure.

AN INSURANCE agent was filling out an application blank.

"Have you ever had appendicitis?" he asked.

"Well," answered the applicant, "I was operated on, but I have never felt quite sure whether it was appendicitis or professional curiosity."

Third Installment of the Story of Two Men and a Woman

INTO THE PRIMITIVE

By Robert Ames Bennet

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CHAPTER IX.

THE LEOPARD'S DEN.

WHILE Blake made a successful trip for the abandoned cocoanuts, his companions leveled the stones beneath the ledges chosen by Winthrope, and gathered enough dried sea-weed along the talus to soften the hard beds.

Soothed by the monotonous wash of the sea among the rocks, even Miss Leslie slept well. Blake, who had insisted that she should retain his coat, was wakened by the chilliness preceding the dawn. Five minutes later they started on their journey.

The starlight glimmered on the waves and shed a faint radiance over the rocks. This and their knowledge of the way enabled them to pick a path along the foot of the cliff without difficulty. Once on the beach, they swung along at a smart gait, invigorated by the cool air.

Dawn found them half way to their goal. Blake called a halt when the first red streaks shot up the eastern sky. All stood waiting until the quickly following sun sprang forth from the sea. Blake's first act was to glance from one headland to the other, estimating their relative distances. His grunt of satisfaction was lost in Winthrope's exclamation, "By Jove, look at the cattle!"

Blake and Miss Leslie turned to stare at the droves of animals moving about between them and the border of the tall grass. Miss Leslie was the first to speak. "They can't be cattle, Mr. Winthrope. There are some with stripes. I do believe they're zebras!"

"Get down!" commanded Blake. "They're all wild game. Those big ox-like fellows to the left of the zebras are eland. Whee! wouldn't we be in it if we owned that water hole? I'll bet I'd have one of those fat beeves inside three days."

"How I should enjoy a juicy steak!" murmured Miss Leslie.

"Raw or jerked?" questioned Blake.

"What is 'jerked'?"

"Dried."

"Oh, no; I mean broiled—just red inside."

"I prefer mine quite rare," added Winthrope.

"That's the way you'll get it, d—d rare. Beg your pardon, Miss Jenny! Without fire, we'll have the choice of raw or jerked."

"Horrors!"

"Jerked meat is all right. You cut your game in strips——"

"With a penknife!" laughed Miss Leslie.

Blake stared at her glumly. "That's so. You've got it back on me—Butcher a beef with a penknife! We'll have to take it raw, and dog-fashion at that."

"Haven't I heard of bamboo knives?" said Winthrope.

"Bamboo?"

"I'm sure I can't say, but as I remember, it seems to me that the varnish-like glaze——"

"Silica? Say, that would cut meat. But where in—where in hades are the bamboos?"

"I'm sure I can't say. Only I remember that I have seen them in other tropical places, you know."

"Meantime I prefer cocoanuts, until we have a fire to broil our steaks," remarked Miss Leslie.

"Ditto, Miss Jenny, long's we have the nuts and no meat. I'm a vegetarian now—but maybe my mouth ain't watering for something else. Look at all those chops and roasts and stews running around out there!"

"They are making for the grass," observed Winthrope. "Hadn't we better start?"

"Nuts won't weigh so much without the shells. We'll eat right here."

There were only a few nuts left. They were drained and cracked and scooped out, one after another. The last chanced to break evenly across the middle.

"Hello," said Blake, "The lower part of this will do for a bowl, Miss Jenny. When you've eaten the cream, put it in your pocket. Say, Win, have you got the bottle and keys and——"

"All safe—everything."

"Are you sure, Mr. Winthrope?" asked Miss Leslie. "Men's pockets seem so open. Twice I've had to pick up Mr. Blake's locket."

"Locket?" echoed Blake.

"The ivory locket. Women may be curious, Mr. Blake, but I assure you, I did not look inside, tho——"

"Let me—give it here—quick!" gasped Blake.

Startled by his tone and look, Miss Leslie caught an oval object from the side pocket of the coat, and thrust it into Blake's outstretched hand. For a moment he stared at it, unable to believe his eyes; then he leaped up, with a yell that sent the droves of zebras and antelope into the tall grass.

You Can Go On After Reading This

A CYCLONE and a shipwreck off the Mozambique coast of Africa throw two men and one woman on their own resources. Winthrope, an American, is in a state of intoxication when the waves toss him onto the barren shore. His two companions, one an Englishman of supposedly high rank, the other, a wealthy American girl, despise him while they recognize that they are utterly dependent on him to continue living. For this reason they obey his commands, and set out to follow him inland to seek shelter for the night. Blake finds lodging for them for the night in a tall tree, and luckily they come upon food. The following morning they set out to find a permanent dwelling. The search is long and arduous, and at the end of the day they are again forced to take temporary shelter for the night and resume their hunt on the morrow.

The above will enable you to go on with this story, begun in No. 22, the Ledger, June 1. Back copies containing earlier chapters can be obtained thru this office or from our agents and newsdealers.

"Oh! oh!" screamed Miss Leslie. "Is it a snake? Are you bitten?"

"Bitten? Yes, by John Barleycorn! Must have been fuzzy drunk to put it in my coat. Always carry it in my fob pocket. What a blasted infernal idiot I've been! Kick me, Win—kick me hard!"

"I say, Blake, what is it? I don't quite take you. If you would only——"

"Fire!—fire! Can't you see? We've got all h—l beat! Look here."

He snapped open the slide of the supposed locket, and before either of his companions could realize what he would be about, was focussing the lens of a surveyor's magnifying glass upon the back of Winthrope's hand. The Englishman jerked the hand away——

"Ow! That burns!"

Blake shook the glass in their bewildered faces.

"Look there!" he shouted, "there's fire; there's water; there's birds' eggs and beefsteaks! Here's where we trek on the back trail. We'll smoke out that leopard in short order!"

"You don't mean to say, Blake——"

"No; I mean to do! Don't worry. You can hide with Miss Jenny on the point, while I engineer the deal. Fall in."

The day was still fresh when they found themselves back at the foot of the cliff. Here arose a heated debate between the men. Winthrope, stung by Blake's jeering words, insisted upon sharing the attack, tho, with no great enthusiasm. Much to Blake's surprise, Miss Leslie came to the support of the Englishman.

"But, Mr. Blake," she argued, "you say it will be perfectly safe for us here. If so, it will be safe for myself alone."

"I can play this game without him."

"No doubt. Yet if, as you say, you expect to keep off the leopard with a torch, would it not be well to have Mr. Winthrope at hand with other torches, should yours burn out?"

"Yes; if I thought he'd be at hand after the first scare."

Winthrope started off, almost on a run. At that moment he might have faced the leopard single-handed. Blake chuckled as he swung away after his victim. Within ten paces, however, he paused to call back over his shoulder: "Get around the point, Miss Jenny, and if you want something to do, try braiding the cocoanut fiber."

Miss Leslie made no response; but she stood for some time gazing after the two men. There was so much that was characteristic even in this rear view. For all his anger and his haste, the Englishman bore himself with an air of well-bred nicety. His trim, erect figure needed only a fresh suit to be irreproachable. On the other hand, a careless observer, at first glance, might have mistaken Blake, with his flannel shirt and shouldered club, for a hulking navvy. But there was nothing of the navvy in his swinging stride or in the resolute poise of his head as he came up with Winthrope.

Tho the girl was not given to reflection, the contrast between the two could not but impress her. How well her countryman—coarse, uncultured, but full of brute strength and courage—fitted in with these primitive surroundings. Whereas Winthrope . . . and herself——

She fell into a kind of disquieted brown study. Her eyes had an odd look, both startled and meditative—such a look as might be expected of one who for the first time is peering beneath the surface of things, and sees the naked Realities of Life, the real values, bared of masking conventions. It may have been that she was seeking to ponder the meaning of her own existence—that she had caught a glimpse of the vanity and wastefulness, the utter futility of her life. At the best, it could only have been a glimpse. But was not that enough?

"Of what use are such people as I?" she cried. "That man may be rough and coarse—even a brute; but he at least does things—I'll show him that I can do things, too!"

She hastened out around the corner of the cliff to the spot where they had spent the night. Here she gathered together the cocoanut husks, and seating herself in the shade of the overhanging ledges, began to pick at the coarse fiber. It was cruel work for her soft fingers, not yet fully healed from the thorn wounds. At times the pain and an overpowering sense of injury brought tears to her eyes; still more often she dropped the work in despair of her awkwardness. Yet always she returned to the task with renewed energy.

After no little perseverance, she found how to twist the fiber and plait it into cord. At best it was slow work, and she did not see how she should ever make enough cord for a fishline. Yet, as she caught the knack of the work and her fingers became more nimble, she began to enjoy the novel pleasure of producing something.

She had quite forgot to feel injured, and was learning to endure with patience the rasping of the fiber between her fingers, when Winthrope came clambering around the corner of the cliff.

"What is it?" she exclaimed, springing up and hurrying to meet him. He was white and quivering, and the look in his eyes filled her with dread.

Her voice shrilled to a scream, "He's dead!"

Winthrope shook his head.

"Then he's hurt!—he's hurt by that savage creature, and you've run off and left him——"

"No, no, Miss Genevieve, I must insist! The fellow is not even scratched."

"Then why——"

"It was the horror of it all. It actually made me ill."

"You frightened me almost to death. Did the beast chase you?"

"That would have been better, in a way. Really, it was horrible! I'm sick over it, Miss Genevieve."

"But tell me about it. Did you set fire to the bushes in the cleft, as Mr. Blake——"

"Yes; after we had fetched what we could carry of that long grass—two big trusses. It grows ten or twelve feet tall, and is now quite dry. Part of it Blake made into torches, and we fired the bush all across the foot of the cleft. Really, one would not have thought there was that much dry wood in so green a dell. On either side of the rill the grass and brush flared like tinder, and the flames swept up the cleft far quicker than we had expected. We could hear them crackling and roaring louder than ever after the smoke shut out our view."

"Surely, there is nothing so very horrible in that."

"No, oh, no; it was not that. But the beast—the leopard! At first we heard one roar; then it was that dreadful snarling and yelling—most awful squalling! . . . The wretched thing came leaping and tumbling down the path, all singed and blinded. Blake fired the big truss of grass, and the brute rolled right into the flames. It was shocking—dreadfully shocking! The wretched creature writhed and leaped about till it plunged into the pool. . . . When it sought to crawl out, all black and hideous, Blake went up and killed it with his club—crushed in its skull—— Ugh!"

Miss Leslie gazed at the unnerved Englishman with calm scrutiny.

"But why should you feel so about it?" she asked. "Was it not the beast's life against ours?"

"But so horrible a death!"

"I'm sure Mr. Blake would have preferred to shoot the creature, had he a gun. Having nothing else than fire, I think it was all very brave of him. Now we are sure of water and food. Had we not best be going?"

"It was to fetch you that Blake sent me."

Winthrope spoke with perceptible stiffness. He was chagrined, not only by her commendation of Blake but by the indifference with which she had met his agitation.

They started at once, Miss Leslie in the lead. As they rounded the point, she caught sight of the smoke still ris-

"But Why Should You Feel So About It?" She Asked, "Was It Not the Beast's Life Against Ours?"

ing from the cleft. A little later she noticed the vultures which were streaming down out of the sky from all quarters other than seaward. Their focal point seemed to be the trees at the foot of the cleft. A nearer view showed that they were alighting in the thorn bushes on the south border of the wood.

Of Blake there was nothing to be seen until Miss Leslie, still in the lead, pushed in among the trees. There they found him crouched beside a small fire, near the edge of the pool. He did not look up. His eyes were riveted in a hungry stare upon several pieces of fish, suspended over the flames on spits of green twigs.

"Hello!" he sang out, as he heard their footsteps. "Just in time, Miss Jenny. Your broiled steak'll be ready in short order."

"Oh, build up the fire! I'm simply ravenous!" she exclaimed, between impatience and delight.

Winthrope was hardly less keen; yet his hunger did not altogether blunt his curiosity.

"I say, Blake," he inquired, "where did you get the meat?"

"Stow it, Win, my boy. This ain't a packing house. The stuff may be tough, but it's not—er—the other thing. Here you are, Miss Jenny. Chew it off the stick."

Tho Winthrope had his suspicions, he took the piece of half-burned flesh which Blake handed him in turn, and fell to eating without further question. As Blake had surmised, the roast proved far other than tender. Hunger, however, lent it a most appetizing flavor. The repast ended when there was nothing left to devour. Blake threw away his empty spit, and rose to stretch. He waited for Miss Leslie to swallow her last mouthful, then began to chuckle.

"What's the joke?" asked Winthrope. Blake looked at him solemnly.

"Well now, that was downright mean of me," he drawled; "after robbing them, to laugh at it!"

"Robbing who?"

"The buzzards."

"You've fed us on leopard meat! It's—it's disgusting!"

"I found it filling. How about you, Miss Jenny?"

Miss Leslie did not know whether to laugh or to give way to a feeling of nausea. She did neither.

"Can we not find the spring of which you spoke?" she asked. "I am thirsty."

"Well, I guess the fire is about burnt out," assented Blake. "Come on; we'll see."

The cleft now had a far different aspect from what it had presented on their first visit. The largest of the trees, tho scorched about the base, still stood with unwithered foliage, little harmed by the fire. But many of their small companions had been killed and partly destroyed by the heat and flames from the burning brush. In places the fire was yet smoldering.

Blake picked a path along the edge of the rill, where the moist vegetation, tho scorched, had refused to burn. After the first abrupt ledge, up which Blake had to drag his companions, the ascent was easy. But as they climbed around an outjutting corner of the steep right wall of the cleft, Blake muttered a curse of disappointment. He could now see that the cleft did not run to the top of the cliff, but thru it, like a tiny box canyon. The sides rose sheer and smooth as walls. Midway, at the highest point of the cleft, the baobab towered high above the ridge crest, its gigantic trunk filling a third of the breadth of the little gorge. Unfortunately it stood close to the left wall.

"Here's luck for you!" growled Blake. "Why couldn't the blamed old tree have grown on the other side? We might have found a way to climb it. Guess we'll have to smoke out another leopard. We're no nearer those birds' nests than we were yesterday."

"By Jove, look here!" exclaimed Winthrope. "This is our chance for antelope! Here by the spring are bamboos—real bamboos—and only half the thicket burned."

"What of them?" demanded Blake.

"Bows—arrows—and did you not agree that they would make knives?"

"Umph—we'll see. What is it, Miss Jenny?"

"Isn't that a hole in the big tree?"

"Looks like it. These baobabs are often hollow."

"Perhaps that is where the leopard had his den," added Winthrope.

"Shouldn't wonder. We'll go and see."

"But, Mr. Blake," protested the girl, "may there not be other leopards?"

"Might have been; but I'll bet they lit out with the other. Look how the tree is scorched. Must have been stacks of dry brush around the hole, 'nough to smoke out a fireman. We'll look and see if they left any soup bones lying around. First, tho, here's your drink, Miss Jenny."

As he spoke, Blake kicked aside some smouldering branches, and led the way to the crevice whence the spring trickled from the rock into a shallow stone basin. When all had drunk their fill of the clear cool water, Blake took up his club and walked straight across to the baobab. Less than thirty steps brought him to the narrow opening in the trunk of the huge tree. At first he could make out nothing in the dimly lit interior; but the fetid, catty odor was enough to convince him that he had found the leopards' den.

He caught the vague outlines of a long body, crouched five or six yards away, on the far side of the hollow. He sprang back, his club brandished to strike. But the expected attack did not follow. Blake glanced about as tho considering the advisability of a retreat. Winthrope and Miss Leslie were staring at him, white-faced. The sight of their terror seemed to spur him to dare-devil bravado; tho his actions may rather have been due to the fact that he realized the futility of flight, and so rose to the requirements of the situation—the grim need to stand and face the danger.

"Get behind the bamboos!" he called, and as they hurriedly obeyed, he caught up a stone and flung it in at the crouching beast.

He heard the missile strike with a soft thud that told him he had not missed his mark, and he swung up his club in both hands. Given half a chance, he would smash the skull of the female leopard as he had crushed her blinded mate. . . . One moment after another passed, and he stood poised for the shock, tense and scowling. . . . Not so much as a snarl came from within. The truth flashed upon him.

"Smothered!" he yelled.

The others saw him dart thru the hole. A moment later two limp grayish bodies were flung out into the open. Immediately after, Blake reappeared, dragging the body of the mother leopard.

"It's all right; they're dead!" cried Winthrope, and he ran forward to look at the bodies.

Miss Leslie followed, hardly less curious.

"Are they all dead, Mr. Blake?" she inquired.

"Wiped out—whole family. The old cat stayed by her kittens, and all smothered together—lucky for us! Get busy with those bamboos, Win. I'm going to have these skins, and the sooner we get the cub meat hung and curing, the better for us."

"Leopard meat again!" rejoined Winthrope.

"Spring leopard, young and tender! What more could you ask? Get a move on you."

"Can I do anything, Mr. Blake?" asked Miss Leslie.

"Hunt a shady spot."

"But I really mean it."

"Well, if that's straight, you might go on along the gully, and see if there's any place to get to the top. You could pick up sticks on the way back, if any are left. We'll have to fumigate this tree hole before we adopt it for a residence."

"Will it be long before you finish with your—with the bodies?"

"Well, now, look here, Miss Jenny; it's going to be a mess, and I wouldn't mind hauling the carcasses clear down the gully, out of sight, if it was to be the only time. But it's not, and you've got to get used to it, sooner or later. So we'll start now."

"I suppose, if I must, Mr. Blake—Really, I wish to help."

"Good. That's something like! Think you can learn to cook?"

"See what I did this morning."

Blake took the cord of cocoanut fiber which she held out to him, and tested its strength.

"Well, I'll be—blessed!" he said. "This is something like. If you don't look out, you'll make quite a camp-mate, Miss Jenny. But now, trot along. This is hardly arctic weather, and our abattoir don't include a cold-storage plant. The sooner these lambs are dressed, the better."

CHAPTER X.

PROBLEMS IN WOODCRAFT.

IT WAS no pleasant sight that met Miss Leslie's gaze upon her return. The neatest of butchering can hardly be termed aesthetic; and Blake and Winthrope lacked both skill and tools. Between the penknife and an improved blade of bamboo, they had flayed the two cubs and haggled off the flesh. The ragged strips, spitted on bamboo rods, were already searing in the fierce sunrays.

Miss Leslie would have slipped into the hollow of the baobab with her armful of fagots and brush; but Blake waved a bloody knife above the body of the mother leopard, and beckoned the girl to come nearer.

"Hold on a minute, please," he said. "What did you find out?"

Miss Leslie drew a few steps nearer, and forced herself to look at the revolting sight. She found it still more difficult to withstand the odor of the fresh blood. Winthrope was pale and nauseated. The sight of his distress caused the girl to forget her own loathing. She drew a deep breath, and succeeded in countering Blake's expectant look with a half-smile.

"How well you are getting along!" she exclaimed.

"Didn't think you could stand it. But you've got grit all right, if you are a lady," Blake said admiringly. "Say, you'll make it yet! Now, how about the gully?"

"There is no place to climb up. It runs along like this, then slopes down. But there is a cliff at the end, as high as these walls."

"Twenty feet," muttered Blake. "Confound the luck! It isn't that jump-off; but how in—how are we going to get up on the cliff? There's an everlasting lot of omelettes in those birds' nests. If only that bloomin',—how's that, Win, me b'y?—that bloomin', blawsted baobab was on t'other side. The wood's almost soft as punk. We could drive in pegs, and climb up the trunk."

"There are other trees beyond it," remarked Miss Leslie.

"Then maybe we can shin up——"

"I fear the branches that overhang the cliff are too slender to bear any weight.

"And it's too infernally high to climb up to this overhanging baobab limb."

"I say," ventured Winthrope, "if we had an axe, now, we might cut up one of the trees, and make the ladder."

"Oh, yes; and if we had a ladder we might climb up the cliff!"

"But, Mr. Blake, is there not some way to cut down one of the trees? The tree itself would be a ladder if it fell in such a way as to lean against the cliff."

"There's only the penknife," answered Blake. "So I guess we'll have to scratch eggs off our menu card. Spring leopard for ours! Now, if you really want to help, you might scrape the soup bones out of your boudoir, and fetch a lot more brush. It'll take a big fire to rid the hole of that cat smell."

"Will not the tree burn?"

"No; these hollow baobabs have green bark on the inside as well as out. Funny thing, that! We'd have to keep a fire going a long time to burn thru."

"Yet it would burn in time?"

"Yes; but we're not going to——"

"Then why not burn thru the trunk of one of those small trees, instead of chopping it down?"

"By—heck, Miss Jenny, you've got an American headpiece! Come on. Sooner we get the thing started, the better."

Neither Winthrope nor Miss Leslie was reluctant to leave the vicinity of the carcasses. They followed close after Blake, around the enormous bole of the baobab. A little beyond it stood a group of slender trees, whose trunks averaged eight inches thick at the base. Blake stopped at the second one, which grew nearest to the seaward side of the cleft.

"Here's our ladder," he said. "Get some firewood. Pound the bushes, tho, before you go poking into them. May be snakes here."

"Snakes?—oh!" cried Miss Leslie, and she stood shuddering at the danger she already had incurred.

The fire had burnt itself out on a bare ledge of rock between them and the baobab, and the clumps of dry brush left standing in this end of the cleft were very suggestive of snakes, now that Blake had called attention to the possibility of their presence.

He laughed at his hesitating companions. "Go on, go on! Don't squeal till you're bit. Most snakes hike out, if you give them half a chance. Take a stick, each of you, and pound the bushes."

Thus urged, both started to work. But neither ventured into the thicker clumps. When they returned, with large armfuls of sticks and twigs, they found that Blake had used his glass to light a handful of dry bark, out in the sun, and was nursing it into a small fire at the base of the tree, on the side next the cliff.

"Now, Miss Jenny," he directed "you're to keep this going—not too big a fire—understand? Same time you can keep on fetching brush to fumigate your cat hole. It needs it, all right."

"Will not that be rather too much for Miss Leslie?" asked Winthrope.

"Well, if she'd rather come and rub brains on the skins—Indian tan, you know—or——"

"How can you mention such things before a lady?" protested Winthrope.

"Beg your pardon, Miss Leslie! You see, I'm not much used to ladies' company. Anyway, you've got to see and hear about these things. And now I'll have to get the strings for Win's bamboo bows. Come on, Win. We've got that old tabby to peel, and a lot more besides."

Miss Leslie's first impulse was to protest against being left alone, when at any moment some awful venomous serpent might come darting at her out of

the brush or the crevices in the rocks. But her half-parted lips drew firmly together, and after a moment's hesitancy, she forced herself to the task which had been assigned to her. The fire, once started, required little attention. She could give most of her time to gathering brush for the fumigation of the leopard den.

She had collected quite a heap of fuel at the entrance of the hollow, when she remembered that the place would first have to be cleared of its accumulation of bones. A glance at her companions showed that they were in the midst of tasks even more revolting. It was certainly disagreeable to do such things; yet, as Mr. Blake had said, others had to do them. It was now her time to learn. She could see him smile at her hesitation.

Stung by the thought of his half contemptuous pity, she caught up a forked stick, and forced herself to enter the tree-cave. The stench met her like a blow. It nauseated and all but overpowered her. She stood for several moments in the center of the cavity, sick and faint. Had it been even the previous day, she would have run out into the open air.

Presently she grew a little more accustomed to the stench, and began to rake over the soft dry mould of the den floor with her forked stick. Bones!—who had ever dreamed of such a mess of bones?—big bones and little bones and skulls; old bones, dry and almost buried; mouldy bones; bones still half-covered with bits of flesh and gristle—the remnants of the leopard family's last meal.

At last all were scraped out and flung in a heap, three or four yards away from the entrance. Miss Leslie looked at the result of her labor with a satisfied glance, followed by a sigh of relief. Between the heat and her unwonted exercise, she was greatly fatigued. She stepped around to a shadier spot to rest.

With a start, she remembered the fire.

When she reached it there were only a few dying embers left. She gathered dead leaves and shreds of fibrous inner bark, and knelt beside the dull coals to blow them into life. She could not bear the thought of having to confess her carelessness to Blake.

The hot ashes flew up in her face and powdered her hair with their gray dust; yet she persisted, blowing steadily until a shred of bark caught the sparks and flared up in a tiny flame. A little more, and she had a strong fire blazing against the tree trunk.

She rested a short time, relaxing both mentally and physically in the satisfying consciousness that Blake never should know how near she had come to falling in her trust.

Soon she became aware of a keen feeling of thirst and hunger. She rose, piled a fresh supply of sticks on the fire, and hastened back thru the cleft towards the spring. Around the baobab she came upon Winthrope, working in the shade of the great tree. The three leopard skins had been stretched upon bamboo frames, and he was resignedly scraping at their inner surfaces with a smooth-edged stone. Miss Leslie did not look too closely at the operation.

"Where is—he?" she asked.

Winthrope motioned down the cleft.

"I hope he hasn't gone far. I'm half famished. Aren't you?"

"Really, Miss Genevieve, it is odd, you know. Not an hour since, the very thought of food———"

"And now you're as hungry as I am. Oh, I do wish he had not gone off just at the wrong time!"

"He went to take a dip in the sea. You know, he got so messed up over the nastiest part of the work, which I positively refused to do———"

"What's that beyond the bamboos?—There's something alive!"

"Pray, don't be alarmed. It is—er—it's all right, Miss Genevieve, I assure you."

"But what is it? Such queer noises, and I see something alive!"

"Only the vultures, if you must know. Nothing else, I assure you."

"Oh!"

"It is all out of sight from the spring. You are not to go around the bamboos until the—that is, not today."

"Did Mr. Blake say that?"

"Why, yes—to be sure. He also said to tell you that the cutlets were on the top shelf."

"You mean———?"

"His way of ordering you to cook our dinner. Really, Miss Genevieve, I should be pleased to take your place, but I have been told to keep to this. It is hard to take orders from a low fellow—very hard for a gentleman, you know."

Miss Leslie gazed at her shapely hands. Three days since she could not have conceived of their being so rough and scratched and dirty. Yet her disgust at their condition was not entirely unqualified.

"At least I have something to show for them," she murmured.

"I beg pardon," said Winthrope.

"Just look at my hands—like a servant's! And yet I am not nearly so ashamed of them as I would have fancied. It is very amusing, but do you know, I actually feel proud that I have done something—something useful, I mean."

"Useful? I call it shocking, Miss Genevieve. It is simply vile that people of our breeding should be compelled to do such menial work. They write no end of romances about castaways; but I fail to see the romance in scraping skins Indian fashion, as this fellow Blake calls it."

"I suppose, tho, we should remember how much Mr. Blake is doing for us, and should try to make the best of the situation."

"It has no best. It is all a beastly muddle," complained Winthrope, and he resumed his nervous scraping at the big leopard skin.

The girl studied his face for a moment, and turned away. She had been trying so hard to forget.

He heard her leave, and called after, without looking up, "Please remember. He said to cook some meat."

She did not answer. Having satisfied her thirst at the spring, she took one of the bamboo rods, with its haggled blackening pieces of flesh, and returned to the fire. After some little experimenting, she contrived a way to support the rod beside the fire so that all the meat would roast without burning.

At first, keen as was her hunger, she turned with disgust from the flabby sunseared flesh, but as it began to roast, the odor restored her appetite to full vigor. Her mouth fairly watered. It seemed as tho Winthrope and Blake never would come. She heard their voices, and took the bamboo spit from the fire for the meat to cool. Still they failed to appear, and, unable to wait longer, she began to eat. The cub meat proved far more tender than that of the old leopard. She had helped herself to the second piece before the two men appeared.

"Hold on, Miss Jenny; fair play!" sang out Blake. "You've set to without tooting the dinner-horn. I don't blame you, tho. That smells mighty good."

Both men caught at the hot meat with eagerness, and Winthrope promptly forgot all else in the animal pleasure of satisfying his hunger. Blake, tho no less hungry, only waited to fill his mouth before investigating the condition of the prospective tree ladder. The result of the attempt to burn the trunk did not seem encouraging to the others, and Miss Leslie looked away, that her face might not betray her, should he have an inkling of her neglect. She was relieved by the cheerfulness of his tone.

"Slow work, this fire business—eh? Guess, tho, it'll go faster this afternoon. The green wood is killed and is getting dried out. Anyway, we've got to keep at it till the tree goes over. This spring leopard won't last long at the present rate of consumption, and we'll need the eggs to keep us going till we get the hang of our bows."

"What is that smoke back there?" interrupted Miss Leslie. "Can it be that the fire down the cleft has sprung up again?"

"No; it's your fumigation. You had plenty of brush on hand, so I heaved it into the hole, and touched it off. While it's burning out, you can put in time gathering grass and leaves for a bed."

"Would you and Mr. Winthrope mind breaking off some bamboo for me?"

"What for?"

Miss Leslie colored and hesitated. "I—I should like to divide off a corner of the place with a wall or screen."

Winthrope tried to catch Blake's eye; but the American was gazing at Miss Leslie's embarrassed face with a puzzled look. Her meaning dawned upon him, and he hastened to reply.

"All right, Miss Jenny. You can build your wall to suit yourself. But there'll be no hurry over it. Until the rains begin, Win and I'll sleep out in the open. We'll have to take turn about on watch at night, anyway. If we don't keep up a fire, some other spotted kitty will be sure to come nosing up the gully."

"There must also be lions in the vicinity," added Winthrope.

Miss Leslie said nothing until after the last pieces of meat had been handed around, and Blake sprang up to resume work.

"Mr. Blake," she called, in a low tone; "One moment, please. Would it save much bother if a door was made, and you and Mr. Winthrope should sleep inside?"

"We'll see about that later," replied Blake, carelessly.

The girl bit her lip, and the tears started to her eyes. Even Winthrope had started off without expressing his appreciation. Yet he at least should have realized how much it had cost her to make such an offer.

By evening she had her tree-cave—house, she preferred to name it to herself—in a habitable condition. When the purifying fire had burnt itself out, leaving the place free from all odors other than the wholesome smell of wood smoke, she had asked Blake how she could rake out the ashes. His advice was to wet them down where they lay.

"We've Got Old Bobbie Crusoe Beat, Hands Down."

This was easier said than done. Fortunately, the spring was only a few yards distant, and after many trips, with her palm-leaf hat for a bowl, the girl carried enough water to sprinkle all the powdery ashes. Over them she strewed the leaves and grass which she had gathered while the fire was burning. The driest of the grass, arranged in a far corner, promised a more comfortable bed than had been her lot for the last three nights.

During this work she had been careful not to forget the fire at the tree. Yet when, near sundown, she called the others to the third meal of leopard meat, Blake grumbled at the tree for being what he termed such a confounded tough proposition.

"Good thing there's lots of wood here, Win," he added. "We'll keep this fire going till the blamed thing topples over, if it takes a year."

"Oh, but you surely will not stay so far from the baobab tonight!" exclaimed Miss Leslie.

"Hold hard!" soothed Blake. "You've no license to get the jumps yet a while. We'll have another fire by the baobab. So you needn't worry."

A few minutes later they went back to the baobab, and Winthrope began helping Miss Leslie to construct a bamboo screen in the narrow entrance of the tree-cave, while Blake built the second fire.

As Winthrope was unable to tell time by the stars, Blake took the first watch. At sunset, following the engineer's advice, Winthrope lay down with his feet to the small watch-fire, and was asleep before twilight had deepened into night. Fagged out by the mental and bodily stress of the day, he slept so soundly that it seemed to him he had hardly lost consciousness when he was roused by a rough hand on his forehead.

"What is it?" he mumbled.

"'Bout one o'clock," said Blake. "Wake up! I ran overtime, 'cause the morning watch is the toughest. But I can't keep wake any longer."

"I say, this is a beastly bore," remarked Winthrope, sitting up.

"Um-m," grunted Blake, who already was on his back.

Winthrope rubbed his eyes, rose wearily, and drew a blazing stick from the fire. With this upraised as a torch, he peered around into the darkness, and advanced towards the spring.

When, having satisfied his thirst, he returned somewhat hurriedly to the fire, he was startled by the sight of a pale face gazing at him from between the leaves of the bamboo screen.

"My dear Miss Genevieve, what is the matter?" he exclaimed.

"Hush! Is he asleep?"

"Like a top."

"Thank Heaven! . . . Good night."

"Good night—er—I say, Miss Genevie———"

But the girl disappeared, and Winthrope, after a glance at Blake's placid face, hurried along the cleft to stack the other fire. When he returned he noticed two bamboo rods which Blake had begun to shape into bow staves. He looked them over, with a sneer at Blake's seemingly unskillful workmanship; but he made no attempt to finish the bows.

CHAPTER XI.

A DESPOILED WARDROBE.

SOON after sunrise Miss Leslie was awakened by the snap and dull crash of a falling tree. She made a hasty toilet, and ran out around the baobab. The burned tree, eaten half thru by the fire, had been pushed over against the cliff by Blake and Winthrope. Both had already climbed up and now stood on the edge of the cliff.

"Hello, Miss Jenny!" shouted Blake. "We've got here at last. Want to come up."

"Not now, thank you."

"It's easy enough. But you're right. Try your hand again at the cutlets, won't you? While they're frying, we'll get some eggs for dessert. How does that strike you?"

"We have no way to cook them."

"Roast 'em in the ashes. So long!"

Miss Leslie cooked breakfast over the watch-fire, for the other had been scattered and stamped out by the men when the tree fell. They came back in good time, walking carefully, that they might not break the eggs with which their pockets bulged. Between them, they had brought a round dozen and a half. Blake promptly began stowing all in the hot ashes, while Winthrope related their little adventure with unwonted enthusiasm.

"You should have come with us, Miss Genevieve," he began. "This time of day it is glorious on the cliff top. Tho the rock is bare, there is a fine view———"

"Fine view of grub near the end," interpolated Blake.

"Ah, yes; the birds—you must take a look at them, Miss Genevieve! The sea end of the cliff is alive with them—hundreds and thousands, all huddled together and fighting for room. They are a sight, I assure you! They're plucky, too. It was well we took sticks with us. As it was, one of the gannets—boobies, Blake calls them—caught me a nasty nip when I went to lift her off the nest."

"Best way is to kick them off," explained Blake. "But the point is that

we've hopped over the starvation stile. Understand? The whole blessed cliff end is an omelette waiting for our pan. Pass the leopardess, Miss Jenny."

When the last bit of meat had disappeared, Blake raked the eggs from the ashes, and began to crack them, solemnly sniffing at each before he laid it on its leaf platter. Some were a trifle "high." None, however, were thrown away.

When it was all over, Winthrope contemplated the scattered shells with a satisfied air.

"Do you know," he remarked, "this is the first time I have felt—er—replenished since we found those cocoanuts."

"How about one of 'em now to top off on?" questioned Blake.

Miss Leslie sighed. "Why did you speak of them? I am still hungry enough to eat more eggs—a dozen—that is, if we had a little salt and butter."

"And a silver cup and napkins!" added Blake. "About the salt, tho, we'll have to get some before long, and some kind of vegetable food. It won't do to keep up this whole meat menu."

"If only those little bamboo sprouts were as good as they look—like a kind of asparagus!" murmured Miss Leslie.

"I've heard that the Chinese eat them," said Winthrope.

"They eat rats, too," commented Blake.

"We might at least try them," persisted Miss Leslie.

"How? Raw?"

"I have heard papa tell of roasting corn when he was a boy."

"That's so; and roasting-ears are better than boiled. Win, I guess we'll have a sample of bamboo asparagus a la Leslie!"

Winthrope took the penknife, and fetched a handful of young sprouts from the bamboo thicket. They were heated over the coals on a grill of green branches, and devoured half raw.

"Say," mumbled Blake, as he ruminated on the last shoot, "we're getting on some for this smell hole of a coast; house and chicken ranch, and vegetables in our front yard. We've got old Bobbie Crusoe beat, hands down, on the start-off, and he with his shipful of stuff for handicap!"

"Then you believe that the situation looks more hopeful, Mr. Blake?"

"Well, we've at least got an extension on our note for a week or two. But I'm not going to coddle you with a lot of lies, Miss Jenny. There's the fever coming, sure as fate. I may stave it off a while; you and Win, ten to one, will be down in a few days—and not a smell of quinine in our commissary. Then there'll be dysentery and snakes and wild beasts—no; we're not out of the woods yet, not by a—considerable."

"By Jove, Blake," muttered Winthrope, "I must say you're not very encouraging."

"Didn't say I was trying to be."

"But, Mr. Blake, I am sure papa will offer a large reward when the steamer is reported lost. There will be ships searching for us——"

"We're not in the British Channel, and I'll bet what few boats do coast along here don't nose about much among these coral reefs."

"I fancy it would do no harm to erect a signal," said Winthrope.

"Only thing that would make a show is Miss Leslie's skirt," replied Blake.

"There is the big leopard skin," persisted Winthrope. To his surprise the engineer took the suggestion under serious consideration.

"Well, I don't know," he said. "If we had a water background, now. But against the rock and trees—no; what we want is white. I'll tell you—when Miss Jenny sets to and makes herself a dress of that skin, I'll fly her skirt to the zephyrs."

"Mr. Blake! I really think that is cruel of you!"

"Oh, come now, that's not fair! I wouldn't have said a word, but you said you wanted to help."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Blake. I—I did not quite understand you. I really do want to help—to do my share——"

"Now you're talking! You see, it's not only a question of the signal, but of clothes. We've got to figure anyway on needing new ones before long. Look at my pants and vest, and Win's too. Inside a month we'll all be in hide—or in hiding. That's a joke, Win, me b'y; see?"

"But in the meantime——" began Miss Leslie.

"In the meantime we're like to miss a chance or two of being picked up, just because we've failed to stick out a signal that'd catch the eye twice as far off as any other color than scarlet. Do you suppose I worked my way up from axman to engineer, and didn't learn anything about flags?"

"But it is all really too absurd! I do not know the first thing about sewing, and I have neither thread nor needle."

"It's up to you, tho, if you want to help. My sisters sewed mighty soon after they learned to toddle. 'Bout time you learned—— There, now; I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. You've made a fair stagger at cooking, and I bet you win out on the dressmaking. For you can use one of these long, slim thorns—poke a hole, and then slip the thread thru, like a shoemaker."

"Ah, yes; but the thread?" put in Winthrope.

"The cocoanut fiber would hardly do," said Miss Leslie, forgetting to dry her eyes.

"No. We could get fairly good fibers out of the palm leaves; but catgut will be a whole lot better. I'll slit up a lot for you, fine enough to sew with. And now, let's get down to tacks. No offense—but did either of you ever learn to do anything useful in all your blessed little lives?"

"Why, Mr. Blake, of course, I——"

"Of course what?" demanded Blake, as Miss Leslie hesitated. "We know all about your cooking and sewing. What else?"

"I—I see what you meant. I fear that nothing of what I learned would be of service now."

"Boarding-school rot, eh? And you, Winthrope?"

"If you would kindly name over what you have in mind."

"Um!" grunted Blake. "Well, it's first of all a question of a practical—practical, mind, you—knowledge of metallurgy, ceramics, and how to stick an arrow thru a beef roast."

"I—ah—I believe I intimated that I have some knowledge of archery. But I doubt——"

"Cut it out! You'll have enough else to do. Get busy over those bows and arrows, and don't quit till you've got them in shape. Leave my bow good and stiff, I can pull like a mule can kick. Well, Miss Jenny; what is it?"

"Is not—has not ceramic something to do with burning china?"

"Sure!—china, pottery, and all that. Know anything about it?"

"Why, I have a friend who amuses herself by painting china, and I know it has to be burned."

"And that's all," grunted Blake. "Well, let me tell you. When I was a little kid I used to work in a pottery. All I can remember is that they'd take clay, shape it into a pot, dry it, and bake the thing in a kiln. We've got to work the same game somehow. This kind of eating will mean dysentery in short order. So there's going to be a bean-pot for our stews, or Tom Blake'll know the reason why. Nurse up that ankle of yours, Win. We'll trek it tomorrow—cocoanuts, and maybe something else. There's clay on the far bank of the river, and across from it I saw a streak that looked like brown haematite."

Thus far the castaways have gotten along fairly well, but Blake's leadership begins to wear on Winthrope. It would be inevitable with two men and one woman that a clash should come. The interest grows more tense as the story progresses. The next instalment is thrilling.

The Second Half of

THE PENDULUM OF FATE

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By Claude and Marie Watts

The Story of the First Half

BLAIR RANDOLPH, sees his brother, Matthew, kiss Barbara Byrd and it is brought home to him that they are to carry out a pledge made long before and marry. For when they were children they had been promised to each other by Barbara's father, Major Byrd, and Colonel Randolph, uncle of the boys. Blair had never realized until then just how deeply he was in love with Barbara himself. He decides that he must see his uncle and interest him in curbing Matt's wild ways. Mary Morris, the housekeeper, quarrels with Blair and tells him she is Colonel Randolph's common law wife; her son, Jimmy, the chauffeur, is the colonel's son and he, and not the Randolph boys, is legal heir to the Randolph estate. Barbara borrows a thousand dollars from the colonel for a secret purpose. Jimmy Morris has smashed the Randolph motorcar during a joy ride and must face the colonel with the news. Matt Randolph appears to bid Barbara a hurried good-by and refuses explanations. Barbara, going to the colonel's study, finds him on the floor with his head crushed and a big sum of money missing.

With this you can finish the story in this issue. If you wish to read the first part in full, back copies of last week's issue may be obtained from our agents, newsdealers or by mail from our office.

CHAPTER VII.

AN ACCUSATION.

THE room that they re-entered seemed utterly changed and strange to both of them. The same heavy, old-fashioned furniture was there, the same bookcases lined the walls, the same oil portraits looked down from above them—one of the Colonel in his regimentals of gray, one of Blair's father, another of his mother, and others of the line of Randolphs dating back to Revolutionary days—and there was the same fireplace, the same massive, carved mantle, and the same huge clock against the opposite wall, but it no longer seemed like the Randolph library. Chairs had been arranged in a stiff row, and the atmosphere was that of a court.

Foster, the chief, occupied the place at the table where no one but Colonel Randolph ever had sat. Instinctively, Barbara resented this usurpation. She resented, too, his air of importance, and felt that for all his excessive gravity he really relished playing his role amid such unusual surroundings.

Mills, the old gardener, sat huddled in a high straight chair, the carved gargoyles that formed its back seeming to leer grotesquely down upon his bowed head. Jimmy Morris sat by his mother, and she held his hand tightly in hers, perhaps to reassure him, or to nerve herself, or for just the mere physical contact that is such a comfort in time of stress.

Ross and Dr. Watson conversed in low tones near the door. Officer Strong and Joe, the caddy, stood by the open windows that looked out on the lawn. The boy was directly in front of the middle window, and he was fumbling with the heavy lace curtains as if he felt it to be incumbent on him to hold them in place and foil the rather stiff breeze that whipped them in and out. Blair and Barbara quietly took the chairs that were indicated for them, while Frere stepped around behind the chief, standing almost directly under the old clock. Foster cleared his throat impressively before he spoke.

"I believe all the members of the household are here, with the exception of Matthew Randolph, Jr.," he said.

"My brother——" began Blair, but Foster waved him to silence.

"We have learned of his hurried departure," he said. "We telephoned the union station. He was apprehended just as he was boarding a train for the West, and will be here shortly."

Blair's hands clinched; the word "apprehended" struck coldly on his ears.

"I should explain to you," continued Foster, "that I am not now conducting a formal inquiry. I shall not ask that witnesses be sworn, and such statements as they make will be regarded as voluntary. However, I deem it advisable to make a few inquiries at this time, hoping that I may be able to clear up certain points so that some of you may not be subjected to embarrassments that might otherwise be necessary. I am sure that we are all anxious to avoid delays and mistakes.

"A most dastardly crime has been committed here—most dastardly. A distinguished and unoffending citizen has been foully struck down in his own home. There is mystery here. The weapon with which the deed was done has disappeared. We are not certain as to the motive. Under ordinary circumstances the police would be justified in taking into custody all the persons known to have been in or near this house today, up to the hour the crime was discovered, and holding them incommunicado until the evidence could be sifted and the responsibility fixed."

Manifestly the chief was talking for the effect his somewhat stilted phrases, with their implied threat, might have on the minds and nerves of the witnesses he was about to examine.

"But, in seeking to do justice to the guilty we are desirous to avoid injustice to the innocent," he continued. "We are anxious to make only one arrest—that of the assailant. The mystery must be, will be, solved. I may add that the officers believe even now that they can put their hands on the guilty"—he hesitated just long enough to give a proper dramatic value to his next word—"person. I am determined, however, to make assurance doubly sure, if that be possible."

Having concluded this preliminary, he busied himself with a paper—evidently a memorandum—for a space. When he looked up it was with a now-let's-get-down-to-business air, and he spoke incisively.

"Mr. Ross and Dr. Watson, who ran into the house at the alarm, have told us the little they know," he said, "and I believe it will not be necessary to examine them further. Mr. Randolph, what can you tell us?"

Since she had been the one to discover the tragedy, Barbara had expected that she would be the one first called upon, and she could not but wonder if there were any significance in Foster's electing to begin by questioning Blair. The latter was pale and nervous. Was he surprised, too?

"Very little, I fear," he was answering, as he straightened and leaned forward in his chair. "I arose early for a round of golf. I played directly across to the clubhouse where I got a cup of coffee—I was too early for breakfast at home—and at the caddy house I picked up Joe, there"—indicating the boy by the window—"to carry my bag. I played around to the seventh green in front of the house, and then came in to see my uncle. I talked with him a few minutes, then went out and resumed my game. I had almost finished the course when they came for me with a message that I was wanted immediately at home, and I hurried here."

"That is all?" queried Foster, as Blair stopped and leaned back in his chair.

"That is all," affirmed Blair.

"Mrs. Morris"—the official turned to the housekeeper—"where were you this morning?"

"In the dining-room and kitchen, except when I admitted a man who came to see Colonel Randolph about nine o'clock, and to let him out again a few minutes later. I was busy with the housework, as the cook and maid left yesterday."

"Did you know the man?"

"No, sir."

"You are sure that he left?"

"Yes, sir; he went away in an automobile."

"Did you see Colonel Randolph after the man left?"

"Yes, sir. He was sitting in his chair there as I passed the library door."

"Did you see any one else enter or leave the house during the morning?"

"No, sir."

"Were you in the library again?"

"No, sir. Not until—until——" Mary Morris began crying and buried her face in her handkerchief.

"Very well, Mrs. Morris. Now, John Mills," said the chief, consulting the list of names before him, "Where were you?"

Mills looked up and answered miserably. "Oh, I dunnon—I was just 'round the place as usual."

"Were you in the house?"

"No."

"Did you see any one enter or leave the house?"

"No—I wasn't payin' any attention."

Apparently Foster had not expected to elicit any information of importance from the old man, for he passed quickly to the next name on his list.

"James Morris."

Jim rose to his feet, then seated himself again as he perceived that he was not supposed to stand, and he spoke without waiting for questions.

"I was hard at work on the car, sir, all morning, sir."

"You were not in the house at all?"

"No, sir. I intended to come in soon." As he said this he glanced at Barbara. Her mind was alive to details, and she noted that Jim was "all tidied up," as he would have said. His face and hands were clean. Evidently he had succeeded in repairing the machine.

"You say you intended to come in soon—what for?"

"Why, to see if there was any orders for me."

Foster had said that his inquiry would be wholly informal. Up to this time it appeared to be even more than informal—quite perfunctory, in fact. Barbara was thinking of this when she heard her name.

"Miss Byrd, tell us about the money, please."

She was startled at the abrupt demand, as was Blair and every one else in the room. Plainly Foster was not devoid of a certain facility at theatrical effects. Barbara had not expected the examination to begin in that fashion, and it took her a moment to collect her thoughts.

"I was bringing it back to Colonel Randolph when—when I found him," she said, slowly.

"Bringing it back?" The chief echoed her words, even as Blair had in her talk with him in the drawing-room.

"Yes; you see the Colonel had given me the money early this morning. It was as Mrs. Morris said. A man came to see the Colonel about nine o'clock. I was in the yard and saw him come. I was on my way to the library to talk to the Colonel myself. I waited in the yard"—she glanced at Jim, but made no mention of the time she had spent at the garage—"until the man came out and got in his automobile. Then I entered

this room thru that window there. I found Colonel Randolph seated where you are now, with a lot of paper money on the table before him. He said the man had just brought it to him to pay for a farm. I told ——"

"One moment, Miss Byrd." Foster's interruption was sharp, and he turned to Blair.

"Mr. Randolph, did you know of this money? Did you see it when you talked with your uncle"

"Why—yes. I believe the money was on the table——".

"Then why didn't you tell us about it before?"

"Why—well, my uncle was accustomed to handling large sums of money, and—and I didn't think it was important."

"Important!" snapped Foster. "Why, a child would know that it was of the greatest importance, pointing as it does to a motive for the crime."

Blair was decidedly disconcerted, and flushed in his embarrassment.

"Miss Byrd," said Foster, turning to her, "did Colonel Randolph give you all the money he had?"

"Oh, no, there was a great deal more."

Foster turned to Frere, who anticipated his question with a shake of the head.

"There was a little money in his pocket," he said. "but none in the drawer of that table, and I see no place else in here where he might have put it."

The chief thought a moment, then resumed the examination of Barbara. "You were saying that you told the Colonel something?"

"I told him"—she spoke more [illegible] now, and a faint flush stole into her cheeks—"that I wanted some money—a thousand dollars, in fact—and he gave it to me."

"Did you explain to Colonel Randolph just why you wanted the money?" The chief's voice sounded cold, but patiently credulous.

"No," answered Barbara, "not exactly. No—not at all. I told him a secret and he gave me the money for it. It was a bargain."

"Will you tell us, Miss Byrd, what that secret was?" pursued Foster.

The color rioted in Barbara's face. "No, indeed! I will not! It—it hadn't anything to do with things at all!"

"Perhaps I would be the best judge of [illegible] said her questioner pompously [illegible] I won't tell!" There was no mistaking Barbara's decision, nor her embarrassment and the general surprise she had created with her mysterious secret that she had sold to Colonel Randolph for a thousand dollars.

"But, you see, Chief Foster," she [illegible]ed, "I had changed my mind—I was bringing the money back."

Foster indicated clearly that her explanation explained nothing, so far as he was concerned, but he did not press her further.

"Mrs. Morris," he said sharply. "Will you explain how it was that Mr. Randolph here, and Miss Byrd, could both have been in the library here with Colonel Randolph without your knowing anything about it? You said ——"

"I didn't say I didn't know they were here," Mary Morris flared back at him. "You asked me if I saw anybody else come or go, and I said I didn't. I didn't see them, but I knew they were here. I heard them—that is, I heard Mr. Blair. I heard him quarreling with his uncle."

"Quarreling!" Foster jumped as if from an electric shock. The room seemed suddenly small and close and still. Barbara knew that she was clasping and unclasping her hands, while her heart beat so that she could scarcely breathe. "Is that true?" Foster shot the words at Blair with the ugliest possible inflection.

"It is true!" Blair spoke deliberately, but his voice was low and tense, and his face flushed darkly.

"Why didn't you mention this before [illegible] thought it was not im[illegible]" sneered.

"[illegible] exercising ——"

[illegible] interrupted the official. "You were exercising your legal right not to give evidence that might incriminate you!"

"I was exercising," Blair repeated, evenly, "I was exercising my discretion."

"What was the quarrel about?"

"That, I refuse to answer!"

"I know what it was about! I'll tell you!" Mary Morris sprang to her feet, trembling and shaking, but her voice was steady and shrill, and her eyes gleamed with sudden purpose.

"Mary!" Blair, too, was on his feet, and his tone was a menacing command. "Mary, if you know when you're well off——"

"Sit down!" thundered Foster. "You shall not intimidate this witness!

"He can't intimidate me!" Mary Morris' voice rose high above the stir and excitement. "He quarreled with his uncle because he had just found out that he and his brother are not so high and mighty as they think they are, and that they would not inherit all of Colonel Randolph's property and money. He had just found out that Colonel [illegible]dolph had a wife and a son! [illegible] clutched the youth who [illegible] quaking by her side—"you didn't know he was your father, but he was!

"And there—there"—she screamed as she pointed a long, accusing finger at Blair Randolph—"there's the man who tried to murder your father!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NET DRAWS TIGHTER.

AFTERWARD Barbara thought she must have swooned when she heard the awful accusation hurled at Blair, and yet she was dimly conscious of all that transpired.

She had heard Mary Morris sobbing and shrieking in a hysterical frenzy, and she heard the officers quiet the woman, dealing with her roughly and with harsh insistence until she calmed down. She knew that Blair sat there, pale and tense, every muscle and nerve taut, his eyes darker and more somber than ever. She heard Chief Foster saying that he would resume the inquiry, and that he must have further details of Mary Morris' amazing story. And she heard that story, unbelievable, and yet, as she well knew, plausible, and not impossible in the slightest degree.

It Required the Strength of Three Burly Officers to Overcome the Wiry Youth.

The woman told the tale glibly. She had been a young woman when she came to The Oaks as a maid. Colonel Randolph had taken a fancy to her, and she had loved him, not wisely but too well. Her name was Mary Green. She had gone away and stayed almost two years. When she returned she had her baby, and she had given it out that she had married, and that her name was Morris.

She had lived at The Oaks ever since as the Colonel's housekeeper. There was no pretense that Colonel Randolph had married her. She said she knew she could not expect a man of his position to marry a woman of her class, but she had lived with him as his common-law wife; her boy, Jim, was his son, and she had relied on the Colonel's assurance to make ample provision for them in his will. If he didn't she knew the courts would see to it that she had her rights.

She had never told Jim the truth about his father because the Colonel had forbidden it, and she confessed to a lively fear of the Colonel and a desire to do just what he wanted her to do. However, lately she had realized that she was doing her boy a grave injustice, and she had brooded over that to a degree such that when she had had a clash with Blair Randolph that morning in the kitchen she had lost all control of herself and had taunted him with the story. It had made him terribly angry and later she had heard him quarreling with his uncle about it. Knowing how much it meant to him, she believed that he had tried to [illegible] uncle, rather than take the chance of his uncle's recognizing her and the son.

As she retailed it the story was impressive—almost convincing—and things looked very black for Blair Randolph; even tho there was no direct evidence to fasten the crime upon him. No one realized this more keenly than Barbara Byrd, and it seemed to her that the heavens themselves might fall and not crush her so utterly. She had feared it was Matt, and to learn that it was Blair, instead——. No, she would not believe it! Nothing could ever make her believe it!

"What proofs have you of this remarkable story?" Foster was asking.

"Oh, I have the proof all right! He, John Mills"—she was pointing to the old gardener—"he knows it's all true!

Mills nodded as in confirmation. Foster turned to Blair.

"What have you to say as to this story—that is, if you care to say anything?"

"I say —Blair was measuring his words—"I say that it is a lie!" His voice was husky, and he moistened his lips. "That she told the story to me this morning is true. That I—I tried to discuss it with my uncle is also true. He said he would not dignify it either by discussing or denying it."

He paused, and every one was hanging on what his next words might be—a denial, or some explanation that might clear him—when there was a sudden commotion by the windows. Officer Strong had laid a hand on the arm of the boy who was struggling to keep his position squarely before the middle window.

"Leave me be!" Joe cried shrilly.

"Nothin' doin', kid!" said the officer. "I see what you're tryin' to hide!

He pushed the boy roughly aside and leaning out of the window drew from the thick foliage of the hydrangea bushes a golf stick—a heavy niblick. As it came into view a thrill of horror pervaded the room, for its rounded, half-sharp, half-blunt steel head was clouded and spotted. Every one knew instinctively that the dark stain was blood!

CHAPTER IX.

THE WEAPON.

THE hoarse blare of an automobile horn cut the tense silence. Strong stepped forward and deposited the blood-stained golf club on the table in front of Foster. Frere, quickly, and with a whispered word to his chief, picked it up and placed it on the floor, where it was concealed by the table. The crunch of a big machine on the graveled drive was heard, then rapid steps at the entrance and in the hall.

Outside, Matt Randolph had been amazed at the size of the crowd gathered in front of The Oaks. It was with difficulty that the machine could be turned into the drive. Cameras were clicking from all sides, and but for the two officers who accompanied him Matt undoubtedly would have been held up and dragged from the car by the ravenous reporters. As he escaped them they made a concerted rush for neighborhood telephones to give their offices the sensational bulletin that Matthew Randolph, Jr., had been brought to the scene of the crime in the custody of two officers.

That would suffice for another scarehead extra!

Matt had been informed that his uncle had been attacked and was dying, and he knew that he was being brought back for some sort of an official investigation.

He did not know, however, of the tableau that greeted him as he crossed the threshold of the library. Joe, the caddy, had crossed to Blair's side and, throwing himself on his knees, buried his head in Blair's lap. The latter's hand rested on the lad's shoulder, but his white face was turned toward the door to catch a first glimpse of his brother. Barbara, leaning forward, was gazing at Frere as if fascinated. Mills, Mrs. Morris, Jimmy and the rest were only figures in the background to Matt's eyes.

Foster was the one to speak. "Come here Mr. Randolph," he said, "and take this seat by Mrs. Morris."

Matt complied, and Blair, watching him closely noted two things. One was that his brother was greatly agitated. The other he deemed more important—Matt did not speak to Barbara, and appeared rather to avoid looking at her directly.

"You have doubtless been informed of the tragic attempt upon your uncle's life and are glad that our promptness in finding you prevented your departure from the city?"

Foster spoke to Matt, and his words were diplomatically noncommittal. Matt inclined his head in reply and the chief continued:

"We'll proceed with the inquiry. Joe, stand up!"

The boy only clung the more tightly to Blair until the latter spoke to him. "Get up, Joe. Don't be frightened. There's no harm done." Joe rose obediently then, stumbled to a chair, and sat down, his eyes fixed piteously on Blair.

"Joe"—the chief's tone was crisp but not unkind—"what was that you were trying to conceal just now?"

"Nothin'—I wasn't——"

"Don't lie to me!"

"Speak up, Joe," Blair encouraged "Tell the truth."

"It—it was a golf club—a niblick," Joe squirmed.

"Whose golf club?"

The distressed lad looked at Blair before he replied, and even after the reassuring nod he received his words were a barely audible whisper. "Mr. Blair's."

"When had you seen it before?"

"When he was playing this morning."

"Now," said Foster, "why were you trying to conceal it?"

Before Joe could answer, however, Blair interrupted with a show of something more than impatience. "Why torture the poor boy, chief? You know perfectly well that what he did was done out of pure loyalty to me. I admit readily that the niblick belongs to me, and that I was using it this morning."

"Perhaps, then, you will explain how it happened to get in here," suggested the chief.

"As I said before"—Blair seemed to be selecting each word he used with especial care—"I was at the green in front of the house when I decided to come in to see my uncle. I had just played a ball out of a bunker, and had my niblick in my hand. Naturally, or at least without any thought as to doing it or not doing it, I carried the club with me when I came into the house.

"I found my uncle arranging the money, of which you have been told, in small rolls, around each of which he placed a rubber band, and I should say there were about ten bills in each roll. My interview with him was, as you now know, a very painful one. I had intended originally to talk to him about an entirely different matter, of a personal and private nature, but the story Mrs. Morris had told me drove everything else out of my mind."

"You admit that you were angry during the interview?"

"Yes," Blair answered.

"And you had the niblick in your grasp all the time?"

"No!" The denial was sharp. "When I first came in the room I walked over and laid the niblick on the table. When

I left it was still lying there—I forgot it."

"You are quite sure of that?"

"Quite sure. Joe discovered that the niblick was missing after we had played on for a hole or two, but I told him it was not worth while returning for it."

Of the persons in the room, one—poor Joe—believed Blair implicitly. Another—Matt Randolph—was mystified and at a loss what to think. Still another—Barbara Byrd—was striving hard to believe him. To all the others his explanation rang false.

Blair had developed from a silent, reticent boy into a self-possessed, reserved man, and he now sat stonily and impassively accepting this adverse verdict of the majority of his hearers, who had watched the weaving of the chain of evidence or circumstance that fastened the responsibility for the crime on him. To Barbara his bearing and manner were inscrutable. Guilty or innocent, he should have manifested more of the stress under which they were all laboring, and she was forced to admit that his evasions and damaging admissions had left her little to cling to but her faith in him. Still, something bade her cling to that.

At first numbed by the tragedy she had herself discovered, Barbara now found her mind spurred to the greatest activity by this contact with legal processes. Instinctively she had a feeling that if she could only think hard enough and fast enough she might find the true solution of the mystery, and her temples throbbed with the effort she put forth. She contrasted the two brothers, and observed how differently Matt bore himself. He had never learned to control the impetuous, nervous disposition which now led him to stir and twist in his chair, scowl menacingly at unhappy Joe, and show plainly his contempt for the officers of the law, and Barbara feared he would fall an easy victim if subjected to a merciless, keen examination. What did he know? What would he tell?

These questions were to be answered speedily, for even as they took form in her mind Foster was turning from Blair to Matt. The chief apparently elected to deal gently with the younger Randolph. He asked him simple questions and seemed satisfied with whatever answers Matt was disposed to vouchsafe unilluminating tho they were, for the most part. Indeed, the sum total of the evidence he drew from Matt was that the young man had seen his uncle for a few minutes that morning, and that he had got money, a thousand dollars, from him to defray the expenses of a trip West.

Just when it appeared to Barbara and the others that the examination of Matt was at an end, and that it had been wholly perfunctory because the chief had decided that Blair was the guilty man, there was an unexpected diversion, however. Frere, the detective, leaned forward and placed his hand on Foster's shoulder with a slight pressure, then reopened the interrogation of the witness.

"Mr. Randolph," he began, "you are the second person who has testified to having secured a sum of money from your uncle this morning. The sums were identical, and it has occurred to me that that may be more than a coincidence. Do you know anything about this other thousand dollars?"

"Who got it?" Matt parried.

"Before answering that, let me ask you another question: Did you see anyone after leaving your uncle and before going to the union station?"

"Yes," admitted Matt.

"Who was it, please?"

Clearly reluctant the witness made answer: "Miss Byrd."

Again there was a stir in the room that presaged startling developments. Blair Randolph knew that his brother was walking into a deadfall, and wanted to cry out to him in warning, but he dared not. Barbara, too, felt that an unfair advantage was being taken of Matt in that he was being asked to testify without knowing what the earlier evidence had been. Just why this was unfair when he was only being asked to tell the truth she did not attempt to reason out.

"It was Miss Byrd," Frere was saying, suavely, "who got the other thousand dollars. She testified, also, that afterward she found she would not need the money, and she was returning it to your uncle when she discovered the crime. Now, Mr. Randolph, had you asked Miss Byrd to get that money for you?"

Matt flushed angrily. "Why, no, of course not!" he snapped.

"Did Miss Byrd know you needed the thousand dollars?"

"No!"

"Did Miss Byrd know you were going away?"

"No!" Matt almost shouted. "Let's leave Miss Byrd out of this!"

"Miss Byrd," Foster cut in, "did you know Mr. Randolph was going away?"

There was a painful hush, and Barbara hesitated, her confusion acute and perfectly obvious. "You need not answer, if you prefer not to," said the chief, and she knew that it would make no difference what she answered—they knew the truth. Blair was mentally berating his brother. Why had the fool lied?

At a sign from Foster the detective continued. "Mr. Randolph, your uncle was generous—he always gave you money when you asked for it?"

"I usually got what I wanted." Matt was sullen. He was cursing himself for having fallen into Frere's trap, and having told an unnecessary lie, and he was not prepared for the next question, which seemed fairly to hit him in the face.

"As a matter of fact, Mr. Randolph, your uncle didn't give you that thousand dollars—now did he?"

Instead of the flat affirmative that Barbara so confidently expected, Matt hesitated. His face went red, then white, and he cleared his throat nervously before he replied; in fact, Frere had time to reiterate, "Now, did he?"

"Yes—no—that is——" Matt stammered, "not exactly!"

"You took it by force, didn't you?" Frere pressed on.

"No—no—not that!" Matt sprang to his feet and looked about wildly. "I know how improbable it may sound," he burst out. "Uncle had said he was willing that I should go, but when I asked for the money he laughed and refused to give me any. It seemed too unreasonable—I was in such a hurry—I wanted especially to go on that one train—the money was there on the table, lots of it—and I—I just reached over and took one of the rolls of bills and rushed out of the room and out of the house."

In a flash the situation had changed. Whereas there had been certainty of Blair Randolph's guilt, now suspicion had been directed to his brother. Blair had admitted quarreling with his uncle, but the money—the money was at the bottom of the crime, and Matt had confessed that he had taken a thousand dollars, and the remainder of the money was missing.

"One other matter, Mr. Randolph," said Frere. "Your brother has testified that he brought a golf club, a niblick, I believe, into this room and left it lying on the table there. Did you see anything of that golf club when you were here?"

"Yes—no—yes!" Matt blurted.

"Do you mean 'yes' or 'no?' " insisted Frere.

"Yes! It was there on the table, just as he said!"

"Would you know the club if you saw it again?"

"I don't know—perhaps."

Frere stooped, and raising the grisly weapon from its place of concealment behind the table, thrust it suddenly at Matt: "Is that it?"

Matt recoiled from the hideous, sinister, blood-stained thing, and with an excited sob, which showed that his strained nerves were at the breaking point, sank into his chair. No answer came from his trembling lips.

"That is all," said the chief, after a moment, and at his nod an officer moved up behind Matt's chair.

And it seemed to be all that was needed. The wretched youth had exonerated his brother and condemned himself, and the chapter was drawing to a close. Poor Barbara! She perceived that the plan she had carried out in her effort to help Matt had been his undoing. Evidently the old Colonel had meant that Matt should get the money from her. His keen mind had solved readily the mystery of her demand for money, and he had tried to further her little scheme. Instead, he had angered Matt to the point that——! But her mind refused to accept the obvious, horrible end to the thought. She had grown up with Matt's almost constant companionship. She knew that he was a high-strung, intensely excitable, rather wild boy, but for all that it was simply unthinkable that he could be the author of so dastardly a crime. He must be innocent, as she had known Blair to be.

"I feel that I have gathered sufficient evidence in this informal inquiry to warrant me in ordering an arrest." The words, slow and deliberate, unmistakable in their import, had scarcely fallen from the chief's lips when Blair Randolph sprang to his feet.

"It is impossible for any one here to miss your inference," he said. "You are wrong. I wish to say to you that I know my brother was not the last person who saw Colonel Randolph alive!"

Manifestly amazed and disconcerted Foster permitted an incredulous "What!" to escape him. Then he added: "Do you realize, Mr. Randolph, that I can infer only one thing from the declaration you have just made?"

Blair inclined his head. "I assume full responsibility for the statement," he said.

"Blair!" ejaculated Matt. "You don't know what you're doing!"

"I know exactly what I am doing." Every vestige of color had left the elder Randolph's face, but his voice was steady.

After an instant's electric silence the chief asked sharply, "Do you wish to amplify your statement?"

"Not at present," replied Blair, resuming his seat. This time the officer edged over behind his chair.

CHAPTER X.

WHO WAS GUILTY?

UTTERLY dumfounded Barbara turned wildly from one brother to the other. While her loyalty to Matt had precluded the acceptance of the idea of his guilt, her heart beat madly in her throat and her hands went suddenly cold as she realized that Blair was not only permitting the shadow of the crime to fall once more on his shoulders, but was virtually confessing it. And she knew he was innocent! What could he mean?

It was true that she had felt a moment of panic when he had first told her in the drawing-room that he had seen his uncle during the morning, and her faith in him had been rocked again by his admitting the quarrel with his uncle, and by the finding of the gruesome, blood-stained niblick. But, as she had listened to Matt's testimony, a feeling of relief and comfort had come over her, together with a stalwart belief in Blair's innocence that nothing again could shake. She felt now that he, too, was struggling and striving to gain a clew that would unravel the tangle—such must be the purpose of his quixotic course in clearing his brother at any possible cost to himself—and she willed with all her mental force that he might succeed, and that she might help him.

She must think, think! What of Mary Morris and the startling story of her relations with Colonel Randolph? The money! What had become of it?

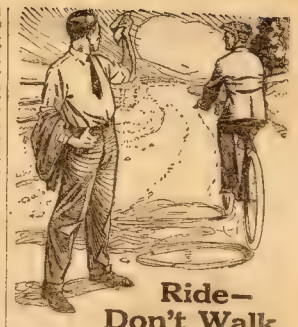
Wasn't it possible that Mary Morris, after her quarrel with Blair over her claim on his uncle, had gone to the Colonel and had quarreled with him, too? And, in the fury of a woman scorned and denied, was it not possible that she had attacked the Colonel, finding a weapon—the niblick—ready at hand? Possible—yes, but, somehow, that solution was not convincing to Barbara.

What had become of the rest of the money? She knew Blair had had nothing to do with it, and she was almost equally confident that Matt had not taken it. Could the Colonel have hidden it away? Her eyes darted around the room in a quest for a possible hiding place, and she heard but vaguely the voice of Chief Foster as he addressed a question to Mrs. Morris. It had something to do with "time." The mention of her own name recalled her, but her mind was still occupied with an association of ideas subconsciously suggested by that word "time," and she said, "The clock—I wonder!"

"Miss Byrd," the Chief was saying, more loudly, "I asked you if you could recall what time it was when you first saw Colonel Randolph this morning?"

Her answer was irrelevant, her mind still grasping at the elusive idea: "Perhaps the money's in the clock!" What time was it? She glanced at her wrist watch, suddenly visualizing the moment when, seated on the table by the Colonel, she had almost mechanically set her watch by the always accurate clock. The face of the little timepiece came back to her as it was then. The dial

(Continued on Page 28.)



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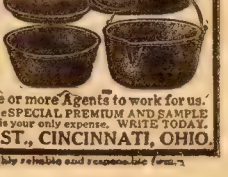

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What Women Are Doing in the War

Women Drummers.

ENTER the lady drummer, or as she prefers to be known, the traveling saleswoman. Employing women in the dress industry to take the place of men who have been called to the colors, has been put to test by a number of manufacturers, and in the opinion of several authorities in the trade, the innovation has come to stay.

Not only have the women equaled the records of the men who had been sent over the same territory, but in some cases even outstripped them. In fact, in some instances, manufacturers have begun to wonder whether they should not have hired women long ago for this work.

"The women we have sent out on the road," said one dress manufacturer, "have, in most cases, made so good a showing and have been so well received by the trade that it no longer is a question with us as to whether or not women, as a class, are qualified for this kind of work. There is no doubt at all that they are, and the women whom we have taken on, and who make good with us, we shall employ permanently.

"We started out originally several months ago with two women on our force of traveling representatives, and since that time we have been constantly adding to our staff, until now we have eleven women out and are planning to take on several more in the near future.

"Where a woman does not make good, and thus far the percentage has been remarkably small, we no longer ascribe it to her sex, but rather take it as an indication that she personally is not suited to this particular kind of work, just as there are men who can never be successful as salesmen.

"Tho the idea of employing women for this work originally occurred to us as a means of doing our bit toward releasing men for Government work and military service, and because we felt that this was no time, if it could possibly be avoided, to compete with the Government for male help, the success we have met with in finding women so well adapted to the work required of them causes us to regret that we did not hit on the plan long ago.

"In the selection of women for this work we so far have not found it to be absolutely essential that the candidate have previous dress experience, or even that she must have had business experience of any sort. She must, however, be well educated, keen mentally, use good English by instinct, and be refined. If she has a fairly liberal supply of these qualities it does not take us long in our school of salesmanship and preliminary training to whip her into shape for the road.

"One of our most successful saleswomen, for instance, is a lady about 30, who had never before been in any sort of business or earned a cent in her life. Like all women of moderate means, however, she was fairly familiar with dress materials and styles, and from experience gained in her shopping tours was a fair judge of values.

"She has a keen intelligence and is quick to grasp a situation and make the most of it. It did not take her long under our tutelage to learn the fundamentals of salesmanship and the minor details of how to take and make out an order. Had we turned this young woman down simply because she had never worked before we would have missed a valuable addition to our sales force.

"Another field from which we have obtained several very successful saleswomen is the dress department of some of the large retail establishments. This, of course, is the ideal training for a girl who proposes to become a traveling saleswoman in the wholesale end of the business. Such girls are thoroly familiar with dress lines and prices, and their experience in selling over the counter is a valuable asset to them.

"They frequently are able to give buyers suggestions on merchandising methods and to cite little experiences of their own when they were selling over the counter, which adds weight to what they say, and gets for them the respect of the buyer, without which very little can be accomplished.

"With women doing the selling, however, we have realized from the first that some radical changes in sales methods would, in all probability, be accomplished, tho what they might be and how successful they would be was the problem which only actual trial could solve.

"For this reason we have endeavored to impress upon these young women that they are not, necessarily, to go out and try to sell merchandise by the same methods that men use, but that, with the benefit of the experiences of men to draw on, they must take what is useful from them and depend on their own individuality to originate and devise methods which, because of their sex, would be more appropriate.

"It is evident, from reports from our saleswomen, that they have adopted some original tactics and with very pleasing results in the way of increased volume of business from these sections. At this early stage of the experiment, however, tho it has proved beyond doubt to be practical, it is hardly possible to compile a manual of 'saleswomanship.'"

How Uncle Sam Cares for His Wounded.

General Pershing Talking to the Matron at a Base Hospital in France

UNCLE SAM so far in this war has made an enviable reputation for caring for his sick and wounded soldiers who are "over there." The scandals of the Spanish-American War, when many of the soldiers died for lack of proper sanitation, precautions and nursing are not to be repeated this time for health and welfare of the soldier are now regarded as equally as important as his training in bearing arms.

In France the base hospitals are built along the same lines as those in this country and the same regime is in effect. So if your soldier boy writes that he is confined in a base hospital do not picture a gloomy, emlieless, cheerless place full of groans and shrieks and pain. Think instead of a large airy, well lighted building with clean, comfortable beds and with a southern exposure to every ward. The hospitals are complete in every particular, any kind of illness or wound can be treated and the staff is composed of competent physicians, surgeons and nurses. If your boy has reached one of these hospitals you may be sure that he is receiving the best attention that human ingenuity can give.

She Makes Munitions.

LIBERTY DAY, and a "help wanted" advertisement in one of Washington's big daily papers, offered just the opportunity Mrs. Florence Bayard Hilles, a noted suffrage leader in this country was looking for.

According to her belief, it is the patriotic duty of every woman physically qualified to replace men for service in the Army and Navy, to offer herself to her country. So, when the Bethlehem Steel Company, located at Newcastle, advertised for helpers in its shell-loading department, Mrs. Hilles applied for a job in the pressroom and got it.

She is now on the payroll the same as several hundred other women, and is working the stipulated eight hours a day

Sensible School Dress.

WOOL is scarce now. Indications are that it will be even more scarce by next fall, and the girls of Central High School in St. Joseph, Mo., have adopted a resolution pledging all the pupils who attend the school during the term opening next fall, to wear uniform dresses in the interest of war economy. The dress adopted is the Peter Thompson style of blouse and skirt. The selection of colors will be left to the pupils, but no woolen goods may be used.

For the present, these same girls have organized themselves into units for emergency service during the war. They will assist in canning vegetables and fruit for the poor during this summer, and will perform any other task set for them by the County Council of Defense There are from ten to fifteen girls in each unit. Surely, they are doing their bit to help win the war. Girls in other sections of the country would do well to follow their example

To the Mothers of America.

"I BRING you a message from your boys in France. They are cheerful and earnest and full of fight—as proud of their country as their country is proud of them.

"From you they yet draw inspiration, and to you they send a message filled with determination and with hope. They hope to make this war the last war that America will ever have to fight against a military despotism, and they want to fight till that hope has been achieved.

"They ask you to be of good cheer, to be with them fondly in your thoughts, and to sustain your hearts in the day of battle as they will sustain theirs.

"NEWTON D. BAKER,
"Secretary of War."

Drops German Name.

SPENDING her mornings as a manicurist to earn pin money didn't appeal to Mrs. Sadie Schmidt as a virile wartime occupation. With her only son in the officers' training camp, Mrs. Schmidt decided that she ought to get something to do which would measure up to a certain extent with the work for which he was training.

Incidentally, Mrs. Schmidt needed a job so that her soldier son wouldn't have to worry about keeping the wolf away from the family door. And the people of Pleasant Plains and Prince's Bay, Staten Island, N. Y., needed some one to save them the bother of going to the postoffice every day, so that they would have more time for their war gardens. A number of men had tried the letter carrying job before, but had quit because they couldn't make ends meet. It cost them so much to get around the twenty-one mile route that there was nothing left to live on. The salary is $90 a month.

But Mrs. Schmidt after using several sheets of paper and a pencil had figures to prove that it was enough to pay for the upkeep of the necessary motor car to carry her around the circuit and still leave money for her to live on. After securing an appointment and buying a motor car which she fitted with compartments to hold mail, circulars, magazines, money orders and all necessary luggage, Mrs. Schmidt began delivering mail on the Staten Island route. After a short time she systematized her work to such an extent that she was finished with it at noon and she had the rest of the day for baking her weekly ten-pound batch of war cake, knitting for soldiers, attending Red Cross meetings and taking care of her spacious house and the adjacent war garden.

Meantime, Mrs. Schmidt decided that her Hunnish name should be changed. Having found it a handicap in getting her appointment and in sending cake and cigarettes to the soldiers, she foresaw that it would be even a greater handicap for her son when he went to France. When he came home last April and showed his mother his second lieutenant's certificate, she put the project up to him.

"What's the matter with taking back my maiden name of Hanley?" she suggested.

"Great!" acquiesced Otto Conrad Schmidt.

"And that Otto Conrad has to go, too," she continued. "Why should any mother label her son with such a name?"

"Search me, mother. I've often wondered," he told her.

Pretty soon the mail carrier's name is going to be Mrs. Sadie Hanley, and the tall young man will be Lieut. Arthur Hanley, and when the Boche meet him in France they will know that he means business.

Woman Farm Doctor.

IF FOOD will win the war, as Mr. Hoover claims, then Mrs. G. H. Mathis, the South's greatest woman farmer, has done more than her share to hand the Kaiser a decisive wallop

Mrs. Mathis is a farm doctor, in other words she can take an old run-down farm, and make it produce money for owner and tenant, while at the same time she is increasing the fertility of its soil.

She began her career as a farm doctor some years ago when she purchased 1,000 acres of the poorest land in Alabama, paying $8 an acre for it. This she divided into fifty acre farms and rented to tenants. Mrs. Mathis does her farming by rule. Every tenant has his work laid out for him during the entire year, and every tenant is required to follow rules strictly, as they are based on the most approved methods of rotating crops and rebuilding the soil.

Mrs. Mathis found that the great trouble with the Southern farmer was that he depended too much on cotton. Now cotton is a great soil "robber," and in a few generations impoverishes the soil so that it will grow nothing. The Mathis tenants are required to grow corn and other crops raised in the Northern States.

The cotton crop, therefore, is the surplus money crop. If the farmer ends the season with one bale of cotton—the average is greater, however—his profit consists of the money he gets for his cotton. He has raised enough meat and vegetables during the year to supply his family, and begins the new year with more productive soil. At the end of five or six years his farm land has been restored to the proud society of rich farm lands and its value is increased many times.

Mrs. Mathis is recognized as an authority on farming and rotation of crops. In the first year Mrs. Mathis was engaged in preaching her farm gospel, farm products in Alabama increased $10,000,000 in value. This gain was attributed mainly to increased interest in diversified farming as practiced in the great farm belt.

The Turkeen Mortgage

By Katherine Howe

[Copyright, by W. G. Chapman.]

"I DON'T care!" exclaimed Bessie Turkeen with bitter emphasis; "I've worked like a slave, and done the best I could to keep up the interest on that horrid old mortgage, and just because I had to get ill and lose that two weeks, and can't come right up to the scratch with the money, we get this contemptible letter from that old skinflint!"

Bessie was undeniably pretty, with golden glints in her hair and blue eyes so dark and deeply shaded they always reminded one of spring violets hidden in the grass. So when she gave vent to a grievance the rest of the family invariably sympathized. The family consisted solely of her mother, her younger sister Jane and herself. In this case they seemed to have very good grounds for sympathy. Bessie was a bookkeeper in a mercantile house in the small town and the breadwinner of the family. Jane, just out of the grammar school, was learning the millinery trade, and beginning to earn a little, while the mother kept the home, sewed, mended and did the thousand-and-one things that unselfish women do, but which are never charged up to their account. George Turkeen, the husband and father, had departed this life about three years previously, leaving nothing much but a handsome gold watch and diamond studs, which had been sold by the widow to pay the doctor's bill and funeral expenses. The deceased had in his youth sown a too-plentiful crop of wild oats, which had estranged him from his elder brother, Jared, and had depleted his energies to the extent of rather unfitting him for efficient service in the battle of life. True, he earned his salary, but he never got a raise, and the mortgage which his brother held on the little home had never been paid off. Jared Turkeen had always been referred to by the younger brother as "that old screw," "miser" or "skinflint," and the fact that he took interest on his mortgage as alone criminal proceeding, so it was not surprising that the family had come to regard him as a grasping, inhuman monster. He did not attend his brother's wedding, and had lived in Australia much of the time, so Mrs. Turkeen and the daughters had never seen him. She had written to the lawyer's office where the interest was sent, and informed Mr. Jared Turkeen of his brother's death, but had never received so much as the courtesy of a reply.

Jane Saw Him From the Window.

After Bessie had given vent to the emphatic protest with which this story opens, little Mrs. Turkeen looked up from her sewing in a troubled, helpless way.

"I don't know what we're to do, I'm sure," she sighed.

"Suppose you write and explain things to him," ventured Jane.

"Yes, a lot of good that would do, when he wouldn't even answer mother's letter about his own brother's death," retorted Bessie.

"Well, I suppose the next thing he'll walk in on us, and foreclose," said Jane.

"Perhaps," added the mother, in the same helpless way.

"I'm always seeing him coming in," went on Jane; "a great, fat, pompous brute with a red face and new clothes."

"And a hard mouth, and whiskers, and creaky shoes and a cane," added the elder sister. "Yes, I dream of him, and wake up so glad it isn't so. Oh, I wish somebody would deliver us from Uncle Turkeen."

"I suppose," ventured Jane, rather timidly, "Tom would help make out the payment, if we'd ask him."

"Of course. But do you suppose I'd let him know? Not on your life!"

Bessie spoke with heat and finality. She had been engaged to Tom Barrett for some months, but as he was only a clerk in the house where she was employed, they were both waiting for better financial conditions before marrying. Barrett was an industrious, capable young fellow, well liked by his employers, and very much in love with the pretty bookkeeper.

The outlook for the three women was certainly rather gloomy, when, to make matters worse, a strange man, almost the prototype of Jane's nightmare, came to the front gate. He took a quick survey of the house, then came up to the door.

Jane saw him from the window.

"It's come!" she cried.

"What's come?" asked her mother.

"That old beast, Turkeen!"

The other two women started up in dismay. The bell rang. They looked at each other helplessly. Then the mother said: "Let him in, Jane."

Jane complied, and ushered in the stranger.

"Are you Mrs. Turkeen?" he asked, addressing the elder lady.

"I am. And you are ——"

"Mr. Turkeen's attorney, Mr. Moore," he interrupted. "I came to see——"

"Yes," put in Bessie, "we know what you came for." And she proceeded to explain the situation in vigorous terms.

"Yes," supplemented Jane, "Bess has worked early and late to try to keep up the interest on that horrid old mortgage. She's engaged to an awful nice chap, but they can't get married, because he isn't very rich, and Bess won't let him know she has to pay it."

Jane had paid no attention to the remonstrances of both the women, but went on: "But what does he care, mean old miser!"

"I think, perhaps, you do him an injustice," said Mr. Moore. "I don't think he knew matters were quite so serious with you."

"Well, why didn't he know?" blazed up Jane. "He didn't even answer mother's letter about father's death."

"About that time," answered Mr Moore, "Mr. Turkeen was going thru the most terrible experience of his life. He lost his wife and only child in an accident in Cape Town. He nearly lost his mind, and had to be kept in a sanitarium for months. Some well-meaning person, fearing the news of his brother's death would prove fatal, withheld the letter, and being amongst strangers, it was some time before he heard."

"But when he did know——" protested the widow.

"Yes, yes; I am not entirely excusing Mr. Turkeen. Undoubtedly he has been careless and selfish—I think he would admit that himself—but he was very bitter against his brother, I think with cause. You may not have known that he was nearly impoverished by his spendthrift brother, that he kept on letting him have money till at last he was obliged to refuse him. Then George repaid his kindness by forging his name to a check. Jared was so exasperated that his only terms for not prosecuting his brother were a mortgage on this property for the amount of the check, and the threat of prosecution if the interest was not promptly paid."

The expression on the three women's faces was enough to convince the lawyer they had never known.

"Perhaps I should not have told you," he said, "but it seemed to me a mere matter of justice."

"Well, I should think so," said the elder girl with conviction. "And I'm going to pay it if it takes the rest of my life."

The lawyer looked questioningly at the girl, then he said: "I shall write fully to Mr. Turkeen, and I am quite sure he will extend the time."

A few days later when Bessie returned from work she said to her mother: "I saw that Mr. Moore coming out of Mr. Dibley's private office today. I suppose he's been spying around trying to find out about me."

The next day she burst in with: "What do you think now? He's been pumping Tom! Yes, Tom asked me what it meant! Jane, you got me into a fine mess!"

Just a week after his first call the imposing form of the lawyer again loomed up in the doorway of the widow.

"Mr. Turkeen wishes me to hand you this paper," he said.

"Is—is it a foreclosure?" asked the little woman, turning white.

"It is a clear title to the property."

"Oh!" cried the three women in chorus, all getting tearful at once.

Then a strange thing happened. The lawyer also got tearful. He asked them if they could forgive his deception. He was Jared Turkeen himself. He wanted to know the truth, and he was glad he came, and he wanted that wedding to come off as soon as possible, so that he could make some more plans for his heirs and assigns.

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Her Last Good-Bye To Corns

WHEN a woman once buys Blue-jay, her corn troubles end for good.

She will try one on a corn. The pain will stop instantly. The corn will soon disappear.

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E. D. LIFE, 537 W. Madison St., Dept. 5T51, Chicago

OUR NEW AUTO CONTEST

This picture shows one of our friends driving an automobile like the one we are going to give away. In the scenery and around the automobile are six partly hidden faces which it will be lots of fun for you to find. Can you find them? Try it. If you do, we will give you a beautiful

FREE SURPRISE PRESENT FOR SOLVING PUZZLE

When you have found four of the faces, mark each with a cross (X), cut out the advertisement and mail it to us, and inclose four cents in stamps for packing, postage, mailing, etc., of the beautiful free surprise present which we will send you. You will delight in owning this present.

AUTOMOBILE GIVEN AWAY We will also make you a present of a Certificate of Entry for 2,000 free auto votes, and tell you all about this splendid touring car which we are going to give away free.

MEN, WOMEN, BOYS AND GIRLS You can also win, in addition to the automobile, splendid prizes such as phonographs, jewelry, silverware, bicycles, cameras, and other things you like, without contest. We will also send you a copy of two national publications worth ten cents.

YOU CAN'T LOSE in this greatest and most liberal contest ever offered.

Write your name and address plainly, and inclose four cents in stamps for packing, mailing, etc., and the free surprise present.

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$6.48 WORTH OF MERCHANDISE FOR $1.98 Write for free descriptive matter.

IRVING-ROYNE CO., Dept. A-3, Ogden Avenue and Taylor Street, Chicago, Ill.

PATRIOTIC PETE
PETE, OUR CLUB'S GOING TO DO WAR WORK HERE TODAY.
SAY, I'LL BEAT IT. I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ALL THAT GOSSIP.
THEY'LL GAS AND EAT ALL AFTERNOON. I KNOW 'EM
3 HOURS LATER.
GUESS I'LL GO HOME AND EAT MY SHARE
NO EATS TODAY, PETE, WE'RE TOO BUSY.
YOU GOTTA HAND IT TO THE WOMEN NOWADAYS. SOME WORKERS!

Edison-trained Bullets.

Two negroes were walking along Ninth avenue, New York City, discussing the wonderful inventions brought about by the war.

"Yes, sah," one said, "an' a friend of mine who knows all about it says dat Mistah Edison has done gone and invented a magnetized bullet dat can't miss a German kaise of dere's one in a hundred yards de bullet is drawn right smack against his steel helmet. Yes, sah, an' he's done invented another one with a return attachment. Whenever dat bullet don't hit nothin' it comes right straight back to de American lines."

"Dat's what I call inventin'," exclaimed the other. "But say, how about dem ramin' back bullets? What do dey do to keep 'em from hittin' ouah men?"

"Well, mah frien' didn't tell me about it. But if Mr. Edison made 'em you can bet youah life he's got 'em trained. You don't 'spose he'd let 'em kill any Americans, do you? No, sah. He's got 'em fix so's dey jes' ease back down room de gunner's feet an' say: 'Boy's all dead in dat trench, boss. Send me to a live place where I'a got a chance to do somethin'."

Very Well, Indeed.

President Wilson is fond of telling a story about an old teamster. This old fellow said to the treasurer of the concern one day:

"Me and that off horse has been workin' for the company seventeen years, sir."

Just so, Walter Scott, "and so sad the treasurer, and he cleared his throat and added: "Both treated well, I hope?"

The old teamster looked dubious.

"Well," he said, "we was both sick down sick last month and we got a doctor for the hoss, while they docked my pay."

She Was Wise.

Two pals, both recently wedded were comparing the merits of their respective wives.

"Ah, yes," said George, who was still very much in love, "my little woman is an angel! She couldn't tell a lie to save her life."

"Lucky beunder!" said Samuel wishing. "My wife can tell a lie to suit I get it out of my mouth."

Kidding Father.

With deep anguish he begged her to reconsider her answer.

"If you don't marry me, Millie, I'll blow my brains out."

"Oh, come now, don't do anything as rash as that. But—but," she reflected softly, "that would be a good joke on father, for he thinks you haven't any."

Fifty-fifty.

"The cook burnt the steak again," exclaimed the experienced housewife.

"Hear me," exclaimed young Mrs. Torkins. "Wouldn't ordinary coal have been a little cheaper?"

High Cost of Gardening.

"You seem troubled about your gardening proposition," said the man on the other side of the fence.

"Yes," replied Mr. Crossiots, "I am wondering whether I can raise enough vegetables to take care of the exceptional appetite the outdoor exercise will give me."

We Wonder.

"This is a special flour for making flannel cakes."

The young housewife was trying to appear wise.

"Does it make good cakes?" she asked.

"Excellent flannel cakes, mum."

"Ah, um. Will they shrink?"

Giving It Away.

"I see you are presenting 'Hamlet' to the public this week."

"Presenting is the right word," resented the manager. "Nothing but deadheads in the house."

Mrs. Knagg—"I can't find words to express my disgust for you!"

Mr. Knagg—"Never mind, dear. It's not your fault. You've made a noble effort to find 'em for the last two hours!"

No Need to Fight.

Tony and Izzi, two young bootblacks who have stands close together on Main street, engaged in hot words the other day which nearly resulted in a fist fight.

"I'll get even with that wop yet," hissed Izzi.

"Goin' to fight, him, are yer, Izzi?" questioned a friend.

"Naw! When he gets troo peddlin' a gent I'm goin' to say to that gent soon's he steps off'n the chair: 'Shine, sir, shine?'"

Hard as Bricks.

"Listen to this, Maria," said Mr Stubb, as he unfolded his scientific paper. "This article states that in some of the old Roman prisons that have been unearthed they found the petrified remains of the prisoners."

"Gracious, John," exclaimed Mrs Stubb with a smile, "those are what they call hardened criminals, I expect."

Making Sure of It.

The Bride-to-Be—"Oh, George, dad's going to give us a check instead of a present."

The Bridegroom—"Good; then we'll have the wedding at noon instead of 2 o'clock."

B-to-H—"But why, dear?"

The B.—"The banks close at 2."

Exceptions.

Sound travels at the rate of 400 yards per second.

Exceptions to the rule:
Scandal—1 400 yards
Flattery—500 yards
Truth—2½ yards
Alarm clock— ——?

Mr. Fortune Hunter.

A lucky man on being asked how it felt to be engaged to a great heiress, replied: "Fine! Every time I kiss her I feel as if I were clipping a coupon off a Government bond."

Hard to Judge.

"What kind of a chap is Parkerton?"

"Really, I don't know. I have only seen him when he was with his wife."

Not Wise to Bet.

Speaking at a dinner, Congressman William C. Houston of Tennessee referred to the charming fads and foibles of the fair sex, and smilingly recalled the following incident:

At a social function one evening one of the male guests began a remark with the words: "I bet she will," when an older gentleman interposed.

"Young man," said he, with a positive air, "don't ever bet that. It will do anything. You can never tell what a woman will do."

"You headed me off too soon," smiled the younger man. "I was going to say that I would bet that she would do the unexpected."

"Don't do it, young man," cautioned the older man. "Even that is not a safe bet."

Less Trouble.

"My wife hates to answer the door bell. She's afternoon when she's out and she says she'd rather take the trouble to wear over than to dress herself around the block."

"Why don't you get a maid?"

"No sense! I tell you the Topcure will be trying to do more good in one day than anything else in a month. It cures everything. What's your objection?"

"Only I'm Thomson."

Good Reason.

"Get really run down? Want a tonic?" said a specialist on being consulted by a Sunday customer. "I've the very thing for you—Thomson's topcure. Four times a day, and in two days you'll feel like another man. Half a dollar a bottle."

"No, no, no!" said the customer, energetically. "But it is the very thing for you. All the doctors are recommending it. We can't get it fast enough for our customers."

"Then you'd better try it yourself."

"No, I would prefer something else."

"Nonsense! I tell you the Topcure will be trying to do more good in one day than anything else in a month. It cures everything. What's your objection?"

"Only I'm Thomson."

Space.

"When I was a young man I was studying astronomy," said the old gentleman, "I used to sit for hours on end gazing upon the vast expanse of space. I would picture to myself the circle of the earth, and then I would try to imagine what lay beyond it. I could never get the least idea of it. Finally I would get a headache and have to desist. Now, I can look at a girl's face for an hour and not get a headache. Funny, isn't it?"

"Why, no," said Miss Cayenne, "I don't think it's funny at all."

Didn't Fancy It.

Pat Rooney was a new arrival on the job. Having gone to the top of the building and failed to return, the foreman shouted up:

"Come on, Pat, what's keeping ye?"

"Sure," said Pat. "I can't find my way down."

"Well, come down the way ye went up," shouted the foreman.

"Faith an' I won't," says Pat. "For I came up head first."

His Identity Fixed

A gentleman who lived in central Africa for many years possesses an amusing drawing of a "race meeting" out there. A leopard is running and apparently overhauling a fat old white man, and two gayly apparelled natives are behind riding on ostriches.

Mr. Knowall: "But your book never deceive you"

Mrs. Longwed—"Just once. One night I asked him where he had been, and I found out afterward that he had answered me truthfully."

How He Satisfied Them.

"The Kaiser is a queer customer," said Jacob Schiff, New York banker and philanthropist, during a Liberty Loan debate. "The more the German people ask of him the less he gives them.

"The way the Kaiser has treated the German people about this business of universal suffrage reminds me of the Blue Mill.

"The hands of the Blue Mill, you know, waited on the owner and told him they wanted shorter hours.

"'Very good,' said the owner. 'Your wish shall be granted, men. We'll begin with shorter dinner hours.'"

The Wrong Dope.

A rich and influential citizen was advancing the claim that poverty is good for the character.

"There is nothing like adversity," said the man of money. "There's nothing like adversity to bring a man out."

"Yes, out at the almsex," quickly retorted the less fortunate citizen.

Like the Drafted Men.

A number of volunteer soldiers were waiting to be "shot" when one of them remarked, "In a way this compulsory vaccination makes us conscripts."

"How so?" he was asked.

"We are forced to bare arms, aren't we?" he replied.

Regulation Actions.

"I see you have a new cook."

"You say so-oh."

"Is she experienced?"

"I surmise so. She started the first day by coming late, and then asking for the afternoon off."

Very Tolerant.

"What do you think of the acoustics, Mrs. Nurich?" whispered her neighbor.

"Oh, I don't mix in them religious squabbles. Let everybody worship in their own way, I say."

What's the Use?

"Jar-din much encouragement," said Uncle Rube, "in forgivin' an enemy who starts in ag'in' de very time you forgive him."

What He Did.

The reprobate was taken in charge by an astute police officer and brought before the magistrate.

"What is the charge against this man?" asked the magistrate.

"Opening a public house at 5 o'clock in the morning, your honor."

"Oh, indeed! And where is his house situated? What licensed premises does he keep?"

"He don't keep none, your worship. He was opening some one else's with a jimmy."

Bad Actor.

Dasher—"Do you think Jerome really lives up to those pacifist sentiments of his?"

Canning—"Judge for yourself: After he made that saccharine pacifist talk last night he went home and pounded his ear for eight hours, got up and tore off ten miles in his car, returned to demolish a huge breakfast, whipped a stream for trout until noon, when he rushed home and speared a few hasty mouthfuls, killed a rumor regarding his friends and beat his wife at golf."—Puck.

Diplomatic.

"Here, boy, take these flowers to Miss Fannie Honeysome, room 8."

"My, sir, you're the fifth gentleman wot's sent her flowers today."

"What's that, you grinning dub? What's that you say? W-who sent the others?"

"Oh, they didn't send any names They all said, 'She'll know where they come from'."

"Well, here, take my card and tell her these are from the same one who sent the other four boxes."

Of Two Evils.

"You always let your wife have the last word."

"Yes," replied Mr. Meekton; "it's better than having her so angry she won't speak to me at all."

An Unexpected Meeting.

President B. M. Hopkins, of Dartmouth College, who has proposed that an honorary degree of Bachelor of Military Science be conferred on all undergraduates who leave college to enter the war, told a war story at a dinner:

"An elderly German general," he said, "was made prisoner at Cambrai, and took his hard luck very hatty. He cursed and swore and growled and time after time he said:

"'Well, there's one consolation, anyhow. I've got an officer son back there in the trenches on the other side of No Man's Land, and he's killing fifteen or twenty of you Englisch a day.'

"The old general was finishing this favorite speech of his for the hundredth time as the prison ship he was on put in at Southampton, and a cheery voice hailed him in German from the pier.

"'Hello, father!' it shouted. 'Have they got you, too?'"

More Wonderful Nowadays.

In these days of the high cost of living the following story has a decided point.

The teacher of a primary class was trying to show the children the difference between the natural and man-made wonders, and was finding it hard.

"What," she asked, "do you think is the most wonderful thing man ever made?"

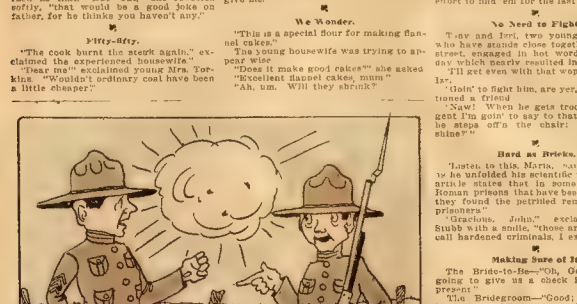
A little girl, whose parents were obviously harassed by the question of ways and means, replied as solemnly as the proverbial judge:

"A living for a family."

But Not That Way.

"I cannot sing, I really cannot," protested the famous Lord Norbury of "bangtop" fame to a pretty and pressing hostess. "I have neither words nor voice."

"You are too modest, chief Justice," said Curran, who was standing by, "for I know hundreds that have hung on your words and thousands that have been transported by your voice."



Sentry—"Halt! Who goes there?"
Sergeant—"Shut your mouth or I'll come over and knock your block off."
Sentry—"Pass, friend."

Her Husband—"Your amazonian regiment looked right on parade, but do you think you could face the enemy with an unruffled front?"
Mrs Battlecry—"Certainly, we're not going to wear ruffles on our uniforms"

PUZZLES

Diagonal Puzzle.

47.

E
S T A R
S T A T E
S T A T E
N

The new diagonal is "E—N," the words are: 1, To obliterate. 2, A noisy feast. 3, To be of use, to turn to profit. 4, To take possession of forcibly. 5, A girl's name.

Diamond.

48

1, In diamond. 2, Possessed. 3, Pertaining to the moon. 4, A number. 5, A spring flower. 6, A favorite. 7, Part of a harness. 8, A domestic animal. 9, In diamond.

Geographical Drop Letter Puzzle.

49—1, Take a letter from an elevation of land and have the abbreviation of a State.
2, Take a letter from a city in Tennessee and leave a town in North Carolina.
3, Take a letter from a city in Florida and leave a county in Iowa.
4, Take a letter from a New Jersey town and leave a chain of mountains.
5, Take a letter from a town in Kent, England, and leave an abbreviation of a State.
6, Take a letter from a river in Russia and have a Russian princess.
7, Take a letter from a Long Island town and have a landing place.
8, Take a letter from an Anglo-Saxon kingdom of the days of Egbert and have a county in Massachusetts.
9, Take two letters from a town in Massachusetts and have a city in Delaware.
10, Take a letter from a State and have a native of this country.

A Charade.

50—There is a gay youth in Corinna,
Who thinks that for game he's a winner;
My one he does two
At my whack with the view
Of having some meat for his dinner.

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S PUZZLES.

43. Diagonal Puzzle.

R E C U R
B L I T Z
C I V I L
U T I C A
R E L A Y

44. Biblical Heroes.

1, Adam. 2, Balaam. 3, David. 4, Noah. 5, Daniel. 6, Esau. 7, Moses. 8, Samson. 9, Lot. 10, Joseph.

45. Age Problem.

Father is 40, mother is 36 and daughter is 12. When daughter is 24 and mother 48, father will be 52, their ages summing up 124.

46. Pied Poetry.

Little drops of water,
Little grains of sand,
Make the mighty ocean
And the pleasant land.

It is not desired that readers send in the answers to the puzzles. They are printed simply as brain teasers, and the correct answers will be printed the following week.

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GENTLE JABS.

A mustache once down isn't necessarily down forever.

The source of many a large river is but a small spring.

It is never too late to learn that you may be too previous.

Existence of friendship depends on the reciprocity of esteem.

Faint heart never gets mixed up in a breach of promise suit.

Some must has charms that would drive a savage to drink.

A dead man is not soon forgotten if his widow marries again.

Some people wear glasses because they can't believe their own eyes.

A new political broom sweeps clean. It is necessary to raise the dust.

She is a wise girl who is known by the company she declines to keep

Some people's idea of economy is saving money for others to spend.

A sponge, unlike a man, swells up when it is made to take water.

Too many folks are interested in business that is none of their business

The path that leads to happiness often crosses a bridgeless stream of tears.

Time, patience and industry conquer all things, but a fat bank account helps.

With plenty of ambition and hustle a man is equipped for wonder working.

The average man is usually too brilliant or too stupid to become famous.

Any chronic borrower soon begins to wonder why every one he knows is broke.

A nomination may be more nearly equivalent to a collection than to an election.

Some people are disagreeable because they are unable to attract attention any other way.

A woman never thinks of anything special to say until she hears some other woman talking.

Women may be divided into two classes: Those who are married and those who are still hopeful.

When the right young man calls with an engagement ring the girl in the case extends to him the glad hand.

If it is true that male mosquitoes do not bite a good many of them have been put out of business by mistake.

Love is a sweet dream, but the first time a young man sees his best girl with her front hair done up in curl papers he is apt to wake up

Your Kitchen in War Time

Meat Substitutes.

LAST week we told you how to substitute potatoes for wheat flour. But wheat is not the only thing which we must conserve if we hope to accomplish a telling victory against the Kaiser's hordes. Meat is equally important. Now is really the best time to come to the rescue of your Government by helping to meet a part of the huge demands of our Allies

When summer comes on, the family will feel better if you will put less meat on the table. There are any number of good substitutes for meat, that will contain just as much nourishment and give your family as much strength. Beans and peas, nuts, milk, eggs, cheese and fish are rich in proteins (the kind of nourishment that meat contains), and should be used in its stead. Also, and this should be taken into consideration by every practical housewife, they are much cheaper and make ideal summer foods.

No doubt you already know many ways of preparing dishes containing these foods, but new recipes always lend novelty to the meal, something which the family likes. The recipes following in this column will furnish you with many new dishes. All of them are real food conservation measures, and at the same time conform to the need of the human body for protein food. They are all economical and designed to meet the average purse. Try them and put money in your purse as well as change in your monotonous daily menu.

Next week, we intend to list a number of sugariess recipes. Now that the canning season is coming, we should conserve sugar in some of our dishes so that we can have plenty of it to preserve our fruits, which promise to be plentiful.

BEAN SOUP—Look over carefully 1 pound of beans. Wash and soak over night. In the morning skim off the fat from the water in which ham was cooked and add the beans and 1 pint of tomatoes, 4 large onions, 2 carrots, 1 bunch of soup herbs. Place the tomatoes in a bowl and squeeze between the hands until they are a fine pulp. Peel and chop the onions fine. Peel and dice the carrots. Add the herbs. Bring to a boil and then cook slowly for four hours. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

CHEESE TOAST—Eight small pieces of toasted bread, 1 cup grated cheese, ¼ teaspoon salt and finely chopped parsley. Dip toasted bread into hot water, lay on a platter that can be put in oven and cover with the grated cheese. Put in oven until cheese is melted. Sprinkle with parsley and serve at once.

BAKED EGGS—Butter gem pans. Break 1 egg into each section. Sprinkle pepper and salt upon each egg and add a tiny bit of butter. Place in hot oven 3 minutes if liked soft; 5 minutes if to be well done. Serve on toast.

SALMON AND RICE—Form freshly boiled rice into flat cakes, brown slightly in butter on both sides and place on a warmed platter. Warm a can of salmon and dip over the rice. Over this pour a white sauce, into which has been stirred the whites of 2 hard-boiled eggs cut in dice. Garnish with the yolks cut into slices.

KIDNEY BEAN STEW—One and a half cups dried kidney beans, 2 cups canned tomatoes, ½ cup rice, 2 tablespoons flour, 1 onion, 1 tablespoon salt. Wash the beans, put in covered kettle, and soak over night in 2 quarts of cold water. Cook the beans slowly in the water in which they soaked. If necessary, add more water to cover and continue the cooking until they are nearly tender, usually about two hours. Wash the rice, cut up the onion and add with the tomatoes to the beans. Cook until rice is tender—about 30 minutes. Mix the flour with a little cold water and stir in carefully to thicken. A small piece of salt pork cut up in cubes and added to the beans at the beginning of the cooking gives a pleasant flavor to the dish. This stew will make a whole meal in itself, with bread and butter and fruit for dessert, to serve five or six people.

POTATO SAUSAGES—One cup mashed potatoes, 1 cup ground nuts or fish; 1 egg, well beaten; 1½ teaspoons pepper. Add butter or vegetable fat. Mix the mashed potatoes and seasonings with the ground nuts, or fish. Add beaten egg. Form into little cakes or sausages, roll in flour and place in greased pan with a small piece of butter on each sausage. Bake in a fairly hot oven until brown.

CHEESE CUSTARD—Butter a baking dish. Put in a layer of bread cut in pieces 1 inch square with crusts removed; sprinkle thin sliced cheese over the bread, and dust with salt and a few grains of cayenne; add other layers of bread and cheese, seasoning as before, using in all about 1 cup of cheese heat 2 eggs slightly, add 1 pint of milk, pour over bread and cheese; bake about ½ hour in moderate oven.

CODFISH AND RICE SOUFFLE—Half cup rice, 1 pint milk, ½ cup shredded codfish, 1 tablespoon oleomargarine. Cook rice and milk in a double boiler until rice is tender and has absorbed the milk. Add well-beaten egg yolks, codfish that has been soaked if too salty, and the margarine. When cool add stiffly beaten whites of eggs and fold in carefully. Turn into a greased baking dish and bake in a moderate oven until puffed and firm.

CALCUTTA RICE—Two cups rice, 2 cups tomatoes, ½ pound cheese, 1 tablespoon salt; peppers and celery or onions may be added, if desired. Boil rice. Mix it with tomatoes, grated cheese and seasoning, and pour into baking dish. Bake half an hour. If peppers or celery are used, cut up and boil with the rice.

TOASTS FOR LUNCHEON—When you have some left-over toast try this way for luncheon:

1. Tomato Cream Toast—One and a half cups stewed and strained tomato, ½ cup scald cream, ½ teaspoon soda, 3 tablespoons butter, 3 tablespoons flour, ½ teaspoon salt, 6 slices toast. Put butter in saucepan. When melted and bubbling add flour mixed with salt, and stir in gradually tomato to which soda has been added, then add cream. Dip slices of toast in sauce. Serve as soon as made.

2. Oyster Toast—Serve broiled oysters on small pieces of milk toast. Sprinkle with finely chopped celery.

3. Milk Toast—One pint scalded milk, 2 tablespoons butter, 2½ tablespoons bread flour, ½ teaspoon salt, 6 slices dry toast. Add cold water gradually to flour to make a smooth, thin paste. Add to milk, stirring constantly until thickened, cover and cook 20 minutes, then add salt and butter in small pieces. Dip slices of toast separately in sauce. When soft remove to serving dish. Pour remaining sauce over all.

SALT FISH WITH ONIONS—Soak fish over night in cold water. If not soaked place on stove 1 hour before meal time in cold water, bring to a boil, turn off water and add fresh cold water two different times. The third time allow to boil until time to serve. When water is added the third time and comes to a boil peel 4 or 5 onions and the number of potatoes needed and place in kettle with salt fish, allowing 15 minutes longer for onions to cook than the potatoes. You will find that the onions give the fish and potatoes a fine flavor. Add pepper and butter when serving.

WELSH RAREBIT—Shave very fine, or grate, a good half-pound medium cheese. Set this aside. In a saucepan pour 2 large cups milk. When scalding hot add 1 tablespoon of butter. Mix 1 heaping tablespoon of cornstarch, dash of cayenne pepper, quarter teaspoon of salt, ½ teaspoon of mustard and ½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce, with a little cold water. Stir into scalding milk and cook about 5 minutes. Then add the grated cheese. Serve on crisp buttered toast.

RICE WITH TOMATOES AND CHEESE—One cup rice, ½ can tomatoes, 2-inch cube of cheese, 2 teaspoons salt, ¼ teaspoon pepper

Wash the rice, sift it slowly into about 5 cups of boiling salted water. Boil 20 to 30 minutes, stirring occasionally with a fork. When done evaporate the water by leaving it partly covered on a low fire. Add the tomatoes and pepper and boil. Pour into vegetable dish and grate the cheese over the top.

CREAMED CARROTS—Two pints of carrots, 3 cups of white sauce. Wash and pare carrots, cut into pieces ½ inch thick, ¼ inch square. Cover with boiling water. Add 2 teaspoons of salt and cook until tender. Remove cover from pan, evaporate the water and add the white sauce, made separately, or you may rub together 4 tablespoons of flour and 3 of dripping with ½ cup of water and 2½ cups of milk and add to the cooked carrots and boil.

MEAT SUBSTITUTE—Six tablespoons of drippings, ¾ cup canned corn, ½ cup tomato puree or canned tomato pulp, 1 teaspoon salt, 1 clove garlic, 2 cups grated cheese, 1 teaspoon paprika, 4 slices bread (preferably corn, rye or oatmeal bread). Melt drippings, add cheese, and stir until it melts. Add corn, stir a moment, then add tomatoes, salt and paprika. Toast bread on one side, rub lightly on the other with garlic cut in half. Pour mixture over untoasted side and serve at once. A poached egg placed on top of each portion makes a very nutritious combination. If wheat bread is used with this dish no other bread should be served at the meal.

CREAM OF ASPARAGUS SOUP—To 1 cup white sauce add 1 cup milk and 1 cup asparagus puree. One cup of the water in which the asparagus was cooked may be used for part of the liquid.

Bring Out the Hidden Beauty

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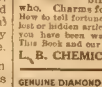

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The Blood of Montezuma

By Victor Ardmore

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CHAPTER XI.

THE BLOW FALLS.

DOLORES had lost all color, her face being pitiably white, and the courage that had always before stood her in good service had ebbed away, but she was loyal to her husband and she came into the conversation with feverish intensity.

"The red diamond is hopelessly lost," she asserted, "but you need not suffer for it. We will give you a sum of money three times the value of the lost stone——"

She paused as Francisco turned his gaze slowly upon her. His heavy face, never brutal, assumed an expression that was almost noble, and his musical voice sounded strongly.

"Do you," he asked, "you who have Aztec blood, think that we are influenced by a few miserable dollars and cents? We are not looking for money. What we seek is the sacred brilliant, the stone that originally fell from the veins of Montezuma, our king; fell as a drop of his blood, but was turned to stone by divine decree. It is the only tangible thing left of our king, and it is sacred. For four centuries we, the chosen Twelve of the Aztecs, have cherished it. It has been stolen, but we will have it back. It is for Senor Windham to say whether it shall be given peacefully or otherwise. But have it we will."

Crispo Bayer curled his upper lip back from his teeth then dropped it, and as his mustache moved and the teeth flashed there was something more wolfish than man-like in the show.

"We will have it!" he echoed. "Give it to us and we will go. Situated as you are, you are better off than Radd Bodil."

The insinuation in the last words was clear, and, for the first time, Windham realized fully what he had to contend with. These men, perhaps law-abiding and peaceful in their private lives, were ready to justify all of his past fears, and their presence with him gave the touch of realism before lacking.

They had decreed that he should die unless he returned the sacred stone, and he could not return what he did not have.

"We need not waste more words," Francisco added. "What is your decision?"

"Understand," interrupted Guido Padillo, "that you cannot escape us by flight. We were with you on the boat from Vera Cruz and we found our way to your stateroom. We have been near here since you arrived, hoping you would betray yourself by publicly exhibiting the Blood of Montezuma. We have hidden in the swamps near by, waiting. We understand, now, that you will not exhibit the stone, so we will wait no longer. The end is near."

"What," repeated Francisco, "is your decision? Will you give us the sacred brilliant?"

"Senores," replied Windham, as evenly as possible, "I have not the slightest idea where it is. You are at liberty to look where you will. I will send all my servants away for the necessary time, and you may search the house, search every room, every fabric here——"

Crispo, curling his lip, snarled something inarticulate.

"Spare yourself words!" directed Francisco. "We will not search, for you have had unlimited time for hiding it. Neither will we delay. Give us the gem or——"

Crispo suddenly laid a knife upon the table before him. He tapped the steel with a finger and nodded suggestively

"We will give you," concluded Francisco, "exactly twenty-four hours to decide. If you are willing to do justice to men who have never harmed you, place a note to that effect in the nook in the largest palmetto tree in the grove—the senora knows the nook I mean—and it will be settled. We will get the note and come for the diamond. If we do not find a note we shall know that you refuse. Then——"

He came to his feet and his fellow Aztecs followed his example.

"Then——"

Crispo repeated the single word and followed it up by tossing his knife in the air and catching it neatly as it fell. He pocketed it and the three Brethren started sturdily from the room

"Wait!" exclaimed Windham. "I swear to you I have not the gem——"

Not a head turned, not a foot stayed. The three Brethren walked composedly from the room, and their steps were heard immediately after on the stairs

Hopeless as it was, Windham was of a mind to hasten after them and renew arguments, but he saw that Dolores was ... g on her feet and he gave his attention to her. She was pallid, and her eyes were half closed under quivering lids. He aided her to the couch and she sank upon it in utter collapse.

His duty was there, and he proceeded to revive her with such remedies as were at hand. His efforts succeeded better than he expected, and with the passing of the worst of the attack her courage flowed back with fresh force.

"We will fight them to the last!" she exclaimed. "We will add to our number of servants, we will pack the rooms with guards, we will have the buildings watched day and night. Yes, and I will myself see them again, argue with them, show them that it is impossible that you can have the red stone. When they go to the Palmetto to get the note you will not write I will be there——"

Windham started, beset with a new fear.

"No!" he exclaimed. "You will not go. Moreover, you will not be alone at any time. Outdoors or in, you will have somebody always with you, myself or the most reliable of our servants. I see now that their surest way, as they will believe, is to strike thru you. That must be prevented."

"Seaver, Speak to Me," Implored a Faraway Voice.

Acting on his idea, he presently called a stout ... nt woman and, leaving Dolores in her care he made a circuit of the outer premises. He found nothing. The Brethren seemed to have dissolved into the night.

The next day he elaborated his plans for defense. Persons were selected to guard Dolores, and weapons furnished. All the precautions he could devise were taken and, in a sense, the mansion became an armed camp. Working, one thought came again and again to his mind.

"Would that Argyle was here!"

Faith in the resourceful explorer was strong, but, turned back upon his own efforts, he did his best alone.

During the day, too, he conceived the idea that there must yet be hope of influencing the Aztecs. Because he respected their wish to regain the Blood of Montezuma, because he sympathized strongly with their lofty desire to preserve the relics of their great king, because he felt he could be good friends with them if their minds were disabused of their false ideas as to himself, and because he felt that their hostile blow, when it came, would be against Dolores, he determined to see them again and make an offer.

He would turn over his house to them for as long a time as they wished. He and his wife would dress themselves in clothes purchased with his money by the Aztecs themselves; thus making it impossible for them to have the diamond about them, and go forth without the least article of luggage. Then the Brethren could hunt to their satisfaction, and have all things to themselves until they saw how hopeless it was. After that he and Dolores could return to their home and the vendetta would be ended.

"For," he mentally argued, "I haven't the Blood of Montezuma——"

He stopped short. Argyle had believed it was really in his possession, basing his belief upon Radd Bodil's dying words, and Radd had been clear and precise. "You have it? Look——" Again the question arose, look where?

Windham turned irritably away, dismissing the subject, but he had planned to meet the Brethren when they came for the note in the palmetto tree. In that he never wavered.

Darkness fell. He cautioned Dolores, the less strongly than if it had been a few hours later. Surely, the Aztecs would not strike until they saw there was to be no note. Until then she seemed safe.

He walked to the grove and stood near the tree mentioned by Francisco. He waited, but no Aztec came. The hour came and passed, and a half hour was added to it. Suddenly uneasiness fell upon him. Presentiment of evil came upon him like a blow and he ran rapidly back to the house and up to his living rooms.

In a few seconds a terrible truth was forced upon him. Neither Dolores nor her servant guard was to be found. Dolores had vanished, and he did not need to be told who was responsible. The Aztecs had struck.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GREAT PERIL.

THE unsuspecting servants in the lower part of the house were taking a few minutes of leisure after completing their work for the night when Windham appeared among them, flushed of face and wrung by excitement and consternation.

"Your mistress has been kidnaped!" he cried. "Go out, every person here, and search. Go fast, go far! Find her! A thousand dollars to the one who discovers her!"

Stupefaction fell upon the group, only one man having presence of mind to come promptly into the case with a practical question.

"Which way?" he asked briefly.

"All ways! Scatter and hunt everywhere. Each person, men and women, go by himself, but run swiftly. Come with me and I will start you."

He led them outside, distributed them hastily and started them off. They went, puzzled and confused. No explanations had been made, and they did not understand anything save that their mistress was gone. In his dismay and alarm Windham had sent them like the blindfolded on a wild chase

For his own part he ran to the automobile that served him and ordered its operator to get it ready for use. Then he hastened to the public road and looked for signs. In the dust two broad ribbons stretched either way, showing that a motor vehicle had passed by, and he believed it a fresh trail. Satisfied, after some scrutiny, as to its course, he turned back just as his man ran his own car out.

A few seconds later he was flying south with power on that made the machine drone like a behemoth as the tires whirled in the chase.

The whole matter was a plan so uncertain that logic would have turned its back in disgust. Windham had marked Francisco down as a man less of the backwoods than his comrades, and, being more experienced, he was likely to know how to operate a car. Given such a vehicle, it was but fifty miles to the Gulf. The road being good, that meant a run of only an hour with proper power.

Water lay beyond, with Mexico on the other side. Again, given a sailboat or larger craft, two women prisoners could be carried quickly to the land of the Aztecs.

From the beginning the American had guessed in this way. To hide the prisoners in the swamps was to have the authorities of Louisiana promptly at their heels. Prudent kidnapers would start their captives on the hour's run with the Gulf as a helper at the end.

Sending the servants as he did was a

Events Leading to Present Situation.

SEAVER WINDHAM, wealthy young American, always in search of adventure, is mistaken for a friend named Lopez by a dying Mexican, and, after receiving secret instructions, hurries off to the Aztec brotherhood guarding the treasures of Montezuma, and successfully passes himself as Corter, the man he found dying. In a mountain vault, known only to the chosen few, he views the Blood of Montezuma, a wonderful sacred jewel. For an unaccountable reason he is attacked on leaving the vault and leaves his attacker for dead. On arriving home, he finds to his dismay that the sacred jewel is in his possession. Windham wishes to return the sacred jewel to the Aztec brotherhood, but fears their wrath. He then determines to tell his friend, Captain Argyle, about his experience. In the meanwhile, Windham discovers that the jewel has been either lost or stolen. He is glad to be rid of it, but a mysterious man entering his rooms at night convinces him that the Aztecs are on his trail. Windham and his servant leave secretly for Vera Cruz where Windham meets Captain Argyle. He has finished telling his friend of his experience when his Arab servant comes to warn him that he is being followed. When the servant sees Captain Argyle he stumbles backward in surprise and falls under the wheels of a passing carriage. Radd Bodil, with his dying breath, says that Windham has the jewel. Both he and Argyle search carefully for it, but it cannot be found. Argyle leaves for Yucatan and Windham for the States, where he meets and marries Dolores Stanley, who has Aztec blood herself. The Aztecs continue the search for the jewel. They shadow Windham near his plantation, and make his wife promise aid. Windham himself has an interview with them in which they demand the jewel and swear vengeance if it is not forthcoming.

This gripping tale of Mexican intrigue and mystery began in No. 21, the Ledger, May 25. Back numbers of the Ledger may be obtained from our agents, newsdealers or from the office of publication.

resort that might mean something important, but he had taken the one most promising chance all to himself. It was a forlorn hope, but he was wedded to it.

The Gulf called to him and he went flying across the landscape with the machine barking complainingly at the unusual wrenching of its joints. Little by little the pointer on the speed-indicator climbed its own hill, reaching forty-five and still mounting.

Windham did not think of Argyle then, and perhaps it was well that long-headed man was not there. It was to be doubted that he would set the seal of his approval on so wild a resort. Yet, Windham's courage did not flag.

"It's the natural plan for them," he muttered, as he leaned forward with the slap of the sea breeze in his face. "I'll run them down!"

It was reckless driving, but it ate up distance amazingly. Miles fall away when fifty is registered on the indicator, and Windham tore down to the water-side with wheels spinning but no unnecessary noise.

He knew the place perfectly, and knew where to halt and where to search for boats. As he shut off the power he rose partly and looked gulfward. The gray of a lightly-clouded sky was there, but it was so light that he could see far across the lifting swell. His spirits had a drop as he failed to raise any boat in the offing, but as the car came to a halt he ran forward.

Beyond was a sea-bank fifteen feet high and he knew a small wharf was at its foot. He reached the top and looked down. What he saw sent his courage vaulting again, and he dashed down the little slope.

A boat was just putting off, its sail switching in the breeze it could not get to its liking, and a look at its occupants told him a good deal. Windham had jerked out a revolver, but there was no time for a hail. If he was to be master there he must be in the boat.

His feet clattered briefly on the wharf and he was at its edge. Clear water ran between wharf and boat and the width of it was demoralizing, but he strained every muscle and took the leap.

Fortune favored him then. He cleared the water and the gunwale, and the boat, slowly righting itself and taking the wind in its teeth, rocked under the blow of his weight. He was aboard, but not as he desired.

Losing his balance he lunged forward, struck upon a thwart and sprawled among the other occupants.

"Seaver, oh! Seaver!"

Windham was conscious of the cry, but it seemed to come from a point leagues away. His head, driven against something far harder than itself, was in a whirl, and a child might have worsted him then. He was struggling to gain his feet when he felt his head pillowed on an arm that certainly was not masculine.

"Seaver, speak to me!" implored the far-away voice.

"I'll be all right in a second, Dolores. The cobwebs are lifting."

Half-stunned, he was slow to realize anything except that his wife was there. Somehow, that pleased him. The dazed condition soon passed and he took coherent notice of conditions. He was in a small sailboat, and two other persons were there besides Dolores.

They were Francisco and Guido.

Windham's hand stole reconnoiteringly for the revolver he had held when he made the leap, but he failed to find it. Well clear of the wharf, the boat now had a stiff sail that was carrying her toward the heart of the Gulf with a swift foot.

He had found his wife, but he was in a boat with two hostile men, and unarmed.

Rallying his energies, presently, he sat up suddenly.

"I'll trouble you," he said curtly, "to put back for the land."

"We are putting for one land," came quietly in Francisco's voice. "The land is Mexico."

"You cowards!" cried the American. "Cowards and kidnapers of women!"

"But," was the even response, "not stealers of diamonds nor killers of two men."

"I have killed no man," fumed the passenger, "but I'll do it if this thing keeps up. Put back to land, you scoundrels!"

"Easy, Americano!" directed Francisco calmly. "You came into this boat against our wishes, and now you must accept what you have forced upon yourself."

"Do you know there is such a thing as law——"

"Easy!" the Aztec repeated. "Remember the stolen diamond and the two men killed in the mountains of Mexico. I would advise that you do not invoke the aid of law. If you do, who will take heed—out here?"

Windham was silent, feeling himself utterly helpless. While he lay practically unconscious the land had been left far behind and the gray Gulf was undotted by other boats. There was nobody to whom he could call for help, and he was with two hostile men, unarmed. To venture a hand-to-hand conflict was suicide under existing conditions. Beaten by the stiff wind, the water was leaping in miniature waves that caused the boat to pitch precariously. A fight in its narrow limits would end in sending every soul there to death by drowning.

Helpless! He had found the kidnapers and his wife, but the craft was racing for Mexico.

Holding Dolores tightly and alternately soothing her and muttering anathemas on the Brethren, he watched and studied the danger that was every moment growing greater.

"See here!" he finally exclaimed, "you men don't know how to handle this boat and you will have us upside down. Give me the tiller."

"Easy!" reiterated Francisco. "You will not be allowed a chance to turn us back. We go to Mexico, or to the bottom of the Gulf!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A SURPRISE.

THE last dim blur of land had dropped astern and the small, overladen boat was pitching in the Gulf waters like a creature in distress. The wind drove hard and the water leaped, and Windham was enough of a waterman to know that they were in great peril. The Aztecs were outwardly phlegmatic, but that only accentuated the danger. To lack of skill was added the unconcern of ignorance.

Already enough water had been shipped over the gunwale to demand recourse to bailing, but there was nothing with which to bail. The American was bareheaded and the hats of the Aztecs were soft and flimsy.

His revolver gone, Windham was helpless.

Trying again, he had exhausted his powers of pleading. He had promised that, if allowed to take charge of the boat, he would faithfully hold its present course and take it to Mexico, but again he was refused. The last word had been said, and he was planning how he could save himself and Dolores when the inevitable calamity came. The one hope was in clinging to the boat when it overturned, and he knew he could do that but a short time.

With Guido faithfully but ignorantly steering their course they were simply awaiting the moment when death would close in upon the victims it was playing with now.

And Dolores—he strained her to his side, glad that she was so brave then, but almost frantic with despair and rage.

The calamity came suddenly when it was ready to strike. Guido had brought the boat hazardously into the wind and Windham was ready for the upset that seemed inevitable when there was a snapping, rending sound, the baby mast broke short off and, with its sail, plunged overboard in a twinkling.

Almost by a miracle the expected had been deferred, but the boat was left floundering in the trough of the sea, without a spare mast for stepping, and without an oar.

The miserable little affair sagged as if in sullen dejection, hugging the troughs, and water splashed inboard in spiteful heaps. A few minutes of this and they would go down, swamped by the weight they could not carry.

"Off with your shoes, you fools!" shouted Windham. "Get to work and bail with them. Every thimbleful counts. Bail with your shoes!"

"Boat ahoy!"

The hail came forcibly to his ears, and he looked up and saw a dark spot on the gray of night. He saw, and his heart and soul colored the wild cry he sent in reply.

"Boat ahoy! We are sinking; and a woman is here. Save us!"

"Keep your seats. Sit tight! We will have you out of that in a second. Sit low!"

Off their beam another, larger boat was riding with a swelling sail and she bore in upon them. Nobody but Windham ever knew how it was done, for Dolores was offering thanks to Providence and the Aztecs were too poor watermen to understand the delicate skill that accomplished it; but the rescuers laid their craft alongside and the passengers were transferred without mishap. They were men of few words, these helpers who had come out of the night, and they asked no questions until it was all over.

For a moment they had considered the feasibility of making the small boat fast with its painter and towing it astern, but the hazard of trying to bail it clear was so great that it was cast adrift. Then the rescuers filled their own double sails and bore away for the Louisiana coast.

Francisco and Guido, saying nothing, accepted this change of course composedly. Perhaps it had dawned upon them that they were not mariners.

During this change Windham had given all his attention to Dolores, but, more than once, a familiar ring had seemed to be in the words that now and then mastered the whining wind and crept to his ear. With the new boat racing for land, and handled with masterly acuteness, he fell to studying the figure farthest from him, and the more he studied the more the darkness seemed willing to give up its secret.

Suddenly the man tore from his shoulders the cloak he had been holding tight.

"Pardon me, Dolores, for my stupidity," he cried in a clear voice, "but this garment must be used by the lady. Wrap it around her well and——"

"Argyle!" shouted Windham loudly.

"Eh? What? Who are you——"

"I'm Windham, and this is my wife! Argyle, Argyle!—who, man, you are a guardian angel come out of the wastes. Thank heaven!"

"Windham!" repeated the rescuer blankly; then he rallied. "By Jove! this is wonderful. For weeks in the wilds of Yucatan presentiment has been fairly shouting to me that I was needed by you, and when I was clear of that region and back in Vera Cruz I took the quickest way of getting here because the presentiment held fast. You did need me—you and——" he glanced at Dolores—"your wife, eh? It's good I am here. Now, no more talking until we land. This water is not a placid cup of tea."

It was rough, but experience and skill were masters of the waves. Land was made safely, and not so far from the former starting point. When all were ashore Windham wrung Argyle's hand, his wild delight leading him to be so merciless, in a muscular way, that the explorer winced under the pressure. When Dolores had been duly presented and had added her word, the Aztecs, who had waited patiently, moved forward.

"Senor," said Francisco politely, addressing Argyle, "you have saved our lives. We pray that the Holy Virgin will reward you."

"These men," interposed Windham brusquely, "are two of the Twelve Brethren of the Mexican mountains. They have kidnaped——"

"Senores," interrupted Argyle courteously, "I am delighted to meet you, and I shall esteem it a great favor to have further acquaintance with you. Pray accept my most friendly regards."

As he spoke he secretly kicked Windham on the ankle, and that man took the hint. There was to be no immediate warfare on the sons of Montezuma. It was the explorer's wish, and his friend knew it was wise. Francisco, however, was not muzzled.

"I remember," he said evenly, "that we saw the tall caballero in Vera Cruz, months ago, when a certain servant was run down by a carriage."

"So you did, senor," Argyle answered. "I am here now to help you find the Blood of Montezuma."

The bluntness of the speech startled Windham, but he knew his comrade's power to guess obscure things and his good judgment, so he said nothing. Francisco, tho, was turned into a spasm of new alertness.

"Prevail upon your friend to give the sacred stone to us and we will forever leave him alone. We have no wish to harm a well-meaning man. Far from it!" and the Aztec's voice rang earnestly.

"I'll take it up at once," the explorer promised. "I want to see you tomorrow at noon. Where shall it be?"

"At my house," interrupted Windham.

"We will be there," said Francisco calmly.

He turned away with Guido following, but Argyle looked at Windham.

"Is it really well to let them go? What have they been doing to you tonight?"

"We are alive," said the younger man thankfully. "Let them go. It is prudent to forgive much now. Moreover, they will come as promised."

Power was soon made and the two motor cars started north, that of the Brethren leading. Argyle's companion, a personal friend who had been with him in Yucatan, had business of his own to attend to, and was dropped by the way where he could take a train, but the explorer kept Windham and his wife company to the end of the journey.

Riding, nothing was said about the Blood of Montezuma, but Argyle was deeply interested in Dolores and talked much of his friend's matrimonial venture. On her part she told how she was kidnaped, being lured outside by a bogus message, together with one of her servants, who was left behind after two miles had been covered.

Windham's house being reached the three entered.

The explorer had seen rough times in Yucatan, but they had only hardened his muscles, and he stood before them, erect, masterful and firm, and his face beamed with good humor as he renewed his kind words to the host and hostess. This done he came to business abruptly.

"Now," he added forcibly, "let us take up the problem of the Blood of Montezuma!"

CHAPTER XIV.

WHERE IT WAS.

YEARS seemed to have dropped from Windham's shoulders as he sat face to face with his old friend. Argyle, the experienced, resourceful and shrewd, had come to his aid, and he was a power. It was not easy to turn the thoughts to gravity when they clamored for the jubilant, but, neither, was it well to forget the Twelve Brethren.

In direct, plain words he told all that happened since he parted from Argyle in Vera Cruz, ten months before, bringing the story down to the present night.

The explorer had listened with rapt attention, questioning when it seemed necessary. With the final words in his ears he drummed lightly upon the table before him.

"Where," he asked thoughtfully, "is the Blood of Montezuma?"

"All I know is that I haven't it," Windham answered.

"Radd Bodil said you had it."

"Radd Bodil, sinner or saint, was wrong. He was delirious."

"Pardon me, but he was as clear-headed as I am this minute. Yes, and he said you had the sacred stone. Now, Windham, I have come back to take this matter up, for it has haunted me all thru the months in Yucatan. I have no new theory, but the mystery must be studied out. I am glad the Aztecs are here, for they must help. We must get our five heads together—six, including Mrs Windham's—and study. When we have done that we must study again and again, and yet again. Not by searching, but by mental process we must find the sacred stone."

"But how?" asked Windham skeptically.

"I don't know," Argyle confessed. "I have sat at this table for two hours, tonight, listening to you and trying to get light. Light is still lacking, but we must persevere. We will turn Louisiana and Mexico upside down. I want those Aztecs to have their cherished property, and I want you to be able to go to sleep of nights in safety. If we can guess where you have it——"

"But I haven't it anywhere!" insisted Windham.

"Radd Bodil said you had. By the way, I am not sure but we might well wish Radd here to help us. He seemed able to do all things, with his skill as trailer, carpenter, mason, cook, doctor and ——"

"Add," interrupted Windham, "dentist. He once filled a tooth for me."

"A gift of the versatile Radd of which I had not heard before. We will add that he was a dentist, and perhaps——"

Argyle stopped short, started, looked keenly at his friend and, in a changed voice, asked:

"When did he fill your tooth?"

"In Mexico,"

"But when—when?"

"Just after I joined him in the City of Mexico, after I had come from seeing the mountain vault. I brought back a toothache, and he found a filling missing from a large cavity, so he went to a local dealer, procured materials, mixed a paste of his own that he called 'soft filling'—meaning, temporary, of course—and treated the tooth, filling it as well as a city expert. It has never ached again to this day."

"Let me see the tooth."

Windham opened his mouth and Argyle looked inside.

"Whew!" he exclaimed, "you have the largest back teeth of any man I ever saw."

Others have noted that fact when looking into my mouth. When I was with the Twelve Brethren in the secret vault, and the Senior Brother was noting the personal characteristics of Miguel

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Vasco and myself—we being new members, you know—he had the secretary write down of me, among other things, 'teeth remarkably large.'"

"How large was the cavity that was filled?"

"Radd Bodil said it was small, but, to me, it seemed large enough to drive a camel into."

"You say the sacred stone was no more than a carat in weight?"

"That was the size—"

"Windham, our work is done. The Blood of Montezuma is in your tooth!"

"What?" gasped the younger man. "You can't really mean that—why, it's impossible!"

"One more question. Just what day did Radd fill the tooth?"

"I think—yes, I know it was the day I last saw the sacred stone. The aching tooth made me a little irritable, and I think I recall that I left the gem in a vest I hung in my sleeping-room, rather careless of its safety. It was then 10 o'clock, forenoon. Before twelve the tooth was treated and filled."

"Remarkable Radd Bodil!" exclaimed Argyle, in real admiration. "Citizen of many lands, strangler, murderer, diplomat, servant, carpenter, doctor, dentist, thief and marvel of ingenuity—I take off my hat to him. You and I, Windham, are children in strategy compared with him."

Windham stared, blank, unbelieving, and Argyle quietly added:

"Remember Radd's last words to you, when he tried to tell the truth. He said, 'You have it! Look——' If death had not stilled his tongue forever he would have said, 'Look in your tooth!' It is very plain."

"But the size of the diamond——"

"Look at the size of your teeth in a glass and you will pass that argument by. Now, let's study Radd Bodil. It suited his chameleon nature to serve you faithfully, but he had been a deliberate murderer, so we may safely believe him a thief. You dropped the Blood of Montezuma on the floor and he saw it. If it was anywhere near as glorious an object as you claim his cupidity must have been mightily awakened. He resolved to have it. Next, a man as sharp as he must have discovered, long before you did, that you were followed by strange men, namely, the Brethren. He realized the danger of trying to take the gem out of Mexico and, when your tooth so opportunely offered a way, cunningly saw that way. He placed the gem in the tooth."

"But that would have removed it from his possession and chance of purloining it," objected Windham.

"No. He knew you and he were soon to go to America. Had he lived to reach here he would, depend upon it, have found some way of treating that tooth again, and he would have secured the diamond. Just then, his consuming passion was to get it out of Mexico and baffle the Brethren. Dying, he saw that his day was past, and he tried to tell you all. He said, 'You have it! Look——' And then he died. Look where? Why, in the tooth, of course."

Windham put his hand across the line of his teeth. They certainly were very large, and it began to seem more possible. He leaped up quickly.

"I'll have the soft filling out of that tooth in a five minutes——"

"No," Argyle interposed. "Somebody else has a stake equal to your own, and that is the Twelve Brethren. What you will do is to send for a dentist and have him here when the Brethren come. Then you will open the tooth in their presence."

At exactly the appointed hour, the next day, Francisco, Crispo and Guido came to the Windham house and were ushered into the selected room. Argyle and Windham shook hands with them gravely and kindly, and they were given chairs and cigars. When Dolores, with persuasively amiable words, had brought matches and they had lighted, the explorer took up the conversation quietly.

"Senores," he said, "when my friend, Mr. Windham, told you he had not the sacred gem he told the truth as near as he knew. If it can be shown that he was honestly mistaken, and that he really has it, and it is returned to you, will you drop all resentment against him and leave for Mexico in peace?"

"Amigo," replied Francisco earnestly, "if the stone is returned to us we will at once leave for our native land, that we may restore the stone to its proper place—or to a new one, if it is thought best to chisel out another vault, somewhere—and we will go with nothing but good will for our friends here."

"Enough! Now you shall hear the singular hope that has come to us."

He told of the tooth and its filler, and of his theory, and had each man examine Windham's mouth. With all arranged the waiting dentist was called in and told to do his work.

It was a period that jangled more than one person's nerves, and Windham, usually cool, felt like flinging the dentist out of the window as his fingers and instruments gently probed, but Argyle, keenly observant, was seemingly wholly calm. He had staked everything on a single cast, but he had faith in his judgment. The Brethren, filled with wonder, looked on half dazed.

The soft filling was removed carefully. Then the dentist lifted something, looked, moved to the table and laid it there.

Touched by a strong light from the window, the object sent back a profusion of glittering rays. The Aztecs cried out in wild delight, for the Blood of Montezuma again lay before them.

Five minutes later the Brethren advanced to where Windham stood, Crispo Bayer at the head. No longer was hostility in their manner, and Crispo's face wrinkled in what was very remarkable in him, a smile.

"Senor," he said, his voice unsteady, "we at last believe. You are a man of truth. The sacred gem is ours, and we thank you most humbly—and oh! so deeply!"

Francisco and Guido added their words, and then all three turned to Argyle and dropped on their knees at his feet.

"Hail!" said Francisco deeply. "All hail, man of great wisdom and of large heart. Thy wisdom is greater than the mountains. The dust of thy feet is fairer to thy servants than the perfumes of the blessed places! May many days be thine!"

Then they arose and reverently Francisco picked up the gem. The Blood of Montezuma once more was safe in the care of its legal guardians.

The End.

The Recompense

By Walter Joseph Delaney

[Copyright by W. G. Chapman.]

"WHY, what are you staring at, Margaret?"

The child retreated shyly, put her finger in her mouth and swung sheepishly from side to side.

"Please, Miss Ryford, I did not mean to, for ma says that is rude."

"Then, why——"

"Please, Miss Ryford, I was looking for the wings."

"Bless me! the wings? Child, what is this nonsense?" But tender-hearted little Margaret began to cry and Miss Esther Ryford took her in her arms to solace her. When she had calmed down her little visitor, she resumed her interrogatories, but more gently now.

"Tell me what you mean, child," she said. "You don't offend me; you only puzzle me."

"Well, I heard that stranger in town, who is talking of building a factory——"

"You mean the man they call Boyden?"

"Yes'm. Well, I heard him tell Mr. Pearsons that you was an angel."

"You naughty child! I mean—the impudent fellow!" But, here Miss Ryford paused, for she was blushing furiously. Besides that, the compliment had overwhelmed her. She dismissed her juvenile visitor with a nickel for candy, sat musing on the garden bench for an hour, roved restlessly over the house, fluttered, flushed and acted altogether ridiculous.

Miss Esther Ryford was 26, fair, neat and the possessor of quite a little fortune. She was, however, very sentimental and easily impressed. She had met this stranger, Mr. Boyden, and had not liked him—until now. She was all but engaged to another man, but flattery was very sweet to her fancy. The other man was Neil Taylor. She had not seen him for ten years, but he was returning to Acton the next month.

"I left Acton because, being poor, people might call me a fortune-hunter, if I married you," the letter from the far West, which she had received that morning, told her. "Now I am coming to claim you with lots of money and lots of love."

It was in the perversity of Miss Ryford's nature to play with her happiness, for that was just what she did. Later, she excused herself on the ground of loneliness, on the willful and unnecessary delay of Taylor in coming to her. She met Boyden the next day. He talked as big as ever about what he was going to do for the town in the way of industrial expansion. He talked, too, interestedly of Miss Ryford's affairs. He got permission to call upon her, which he did twice.

All but telling Miss Ryford that he loved her, did the specious knave pursue the brief acquaintanceship. He was showy in his attire and flashy in his ways. He had cultivated the art of flattery to its most refulgent point. It was all a passing, pleasant variation to Miss Ryford. She was not a coquette, but

It Was Signed With the Name of Boyden's Sister.

sometimes there was a certain spice of novelty and excitement in fringing the edge of flirtation.

"My sister will be glad to know you, Miss Ryford," the bold schemer told his new acquaintance. "You see, after I get a plant or two established, we shall make our home here."

"Then you intend to settle in Acton?" inquired Esther.

"Oh, surely. My sister is a widow, and, as you probably are aware, I am an old bachelor, so we quite harmonize in the way of companionship. Adelia is a refined lady, and she will hail with pleasure an opportunity to become a member of the charmed social circle of which I have noted you are the center."

At the end of a week Boyden left Acton. He made a final call upon Esther. If ever a man indicated suppressed admiration—more, a dawning affection—it was this practical scoundrel, for of that type he was in the fullest sense of the word.

"I declare, it has been a pleasing variation to the dull monotony of everyday life!" sighed Esther, when he was gone.

She had not ceased to think of Taylor; she did so now. She experienced a secret resentment, however, at his continued absence. Taylor was slow-going, methodical. He took the time it required and deserved to close up his business in the West.

Ah, what a contrast to Boyden, with his quick, dashing ways! Then, too, the modest social ambitions of Taylor, his care only for practical things.

Whereas, Boyden had always some animating details to discuss on those subjects that attract and interest womankind. He had dazzled Esther with a description of the dresses and diamonds belonging to his sister. According to him, the life of this relative was in accord with the keenest social enjoyments; she was an ideal devotee at the shrine of fashion, and Esther was really eager to meet her.

There came a letter from the widow that put Esther all a-flutter. It was written on the daintiest stationery, the chirography was faultless. It was signed with the name of Boyden's sister. In it Mrs. Walters referred to the deep impression Esther had made upon her brother. She thanked her for assuaging his loneliness at Acton. She felt warranted, she expressed it, in aiming to cherish the acquaintanceship. "Would Miss Ryford feel it strange if she asked her to come down to Rossmore, their country home, just outside of Wayburn, and spend a few days with her during the business absence of her brother?

"How delightful!" exclaimed Esther, upon the receipt of this missive. "What a pleasant change from this dreary existence it will be." And at once replied to the letter, receiving in return directions as to time of her arrival at Wayburn, where the auto would meet her.

Esther arrived at Wayburn the next afternoon. There was the automobile. To her surprise, Boyden was at the wheel. No sister was in view. He was greeting Esther with profuse and lying explanations, when two men came up behind him. Each seized an arm.

"Got you, my hearty!" observed one of the men, and a pair of handcuffs was clasped upon his wrists. The other approached Esther and drew her into conversation. Shamefacedly, falteringly Esther stammered forth her story.

"He's a bad one, ma'am," said the officer, "and you've had a lucky escape. He has no sister. His scheme was to lure you here, hold you a prisoner in the home of some pal and force you to pay a big ransom."

"Can—can my foolishness be shielded?" pleaded Esther.

"Don't worry, ma'am," assured the officer. "You're not the first victim of his schemes. We'll keep mum—he don't dare to do anything else."

And so the episode ended, and when Neil Taylor came home he received the eager devotion of a fiancee who had learned her lesson well.

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A Rhapsody in A-Flat

By Will Gage Carey

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THE little flat wherein lived the rising young composer, Antoine Carmenetti, was on the top floor of the old Markham Building. Here he lived and worked, quite alone, with no one to bother nor molest save only a certain busy charwoman, who insisted upon intruding, with broom and dustpan, bright and early every Saturday morning.

From this top-floor flat, Carmenetti had a sky-line view which, from long association, had grown dear to his heart. From his window he could see the river below, the ships laden with lumber, grain or perhaps with noisy excursionists; and thru a narrow break in the line of towering office buildings, he could glimpse (on a clear day or moonlight night) the shimmering lake beyond.

It was on a night such as made a view of the lake possible that Antoine Carmenetti reclined upon a couch by his open window, dreaming dreams, building airy castles in Spain, absorbed in reveries such as only a temperamental genius ever knows, and occasionally getting back to stern reality long enough to ponder on how he was to pay the rent now nearly two months overdue.

To the talented young composer (rising, but not yet arrived) the problem of rent was the bane of life. It seemed to him that it was ever and eternally due. With an irate and unemotional landlord threatening daily now to throw him out bodily, how was he to rise to the heights of Fame he felt confident he could attain with a soul at peace and in repose, unfettered, fit to bring forth the themes and motives he felt surging and struggling within him?

It was while thus pensively mingling beauteous romance, tinkling, fleeting melodies, fanciful dreams; with the sordid thoughts of a miserly and persistent landlord, that Antoine Carmenetti fell asleep.

He awoke with a start.

He had been in some strange, far-away realm, were all was beautiful and bright. He had seen fields of green, murmuring brooks, twittering birds. He had seen an orchard in full bloom; the sweet perfume of the blossoms seemed still in his nostrils, mingled with the delicate perfume of yellow jasmine. By the side of the jasmine vine, a maiden had stood, slim, youthful—playing a violin. Such music! It had the joyousness of eternal youth and springtime, with a weird, plaintive touch of sadness intermingled which griped the heart.

Antoine Carmenetti sprang to his piano. The air played by the dream-maiden still haunted his mind; but it was fleeting, ephemeral. He touched the keys of the piano; the tones refused to blend with those to which he had listened. He turned aside, and picked up his violin; he drew the bow over the strings slowly, searchingly at first; then more rapidly and with happy assurance. He paused at length, and laughed aloud; the inspiration, the bewitching melody of the little dream-maiden—was his own!

He laid aside the violin, to search for a sheet of score paper upon which to set down the magic notes. He looked thru his desk, on top of the piano, everywhere—no score paper was to be found. In feverish haste he searched for a substitute. On a little table in a back room, he came across two small sheets of pink wrapping paper; these he seized upon, and carried them back to his music-room.

He set to work.

He decided that the forthcoming composition should be a rhapsody; the key of four flats (a-flat) seemed to blend best with the music of his dream. The hours went by; still he toiled away over the little sheet of pink paper, stopping only to pick up his violin from time to time, to make sure that he was following the theme as played by the jasmine maiden.

Finally, with still room to spare upon the sheet, he had set down all which came to him from the haunting melody in the blossoming orchard. The balance of the rhapsody he must procure from the fires of his own genius; but with this basic theme, he felt he could produce a work which would carry him a long way on the road to fame.

He looked at his watch; it showed the hour of 2. He carried the pink sheets over and placed them upon a stand by the open window. He picked up his violin; he turned out the light overhead, then in the flood of silver moonbeams pouring in the window, he played over the weird, plaintive, heart-reaching theme again—the dream-music he knew would be the start and motif of a masterpiece!

He laid aside the instrument at length, gazed again at the notes he had set down, fondly, almost caressingly; then retired for a much needed sleep and rest. Opportunity had knocked; he had seized her forelock. Fame would be his; the rent would be paid!

When he awoke the sun was streaming brightly into the room. Almost on the instant of waking, his thoughts reverted to his composition. He sat up in bed; yes, over there on the table by the window was the pink sheet upon which he had worked. He threw back the bedclothes and started to arise. Just then a lake breeze came thru the window. For a moment it seemed to toy with the pink sheets; they blew up from the table; they fluttered faltering in the air; then, as tho drawn by evil, malignant spirits, they floated back down straight in the direction of the open window. One sheet reached the floor; the other—with one last frolicsome flirt—vanished out the window, eluding the straining fingers of Antoine Carmenetti.

In despair, he placed his hands to his brow.

"My rhapsody in A flat!" he gasped. "It is—gone!"

The day passed miserably for the young composer in the top flat. Much of the time he spent, violin in hand, searching for a haunting melody which he could almost grasp, but which ever eluded him. Why would the notes not come back to him! Who knows? Why had they come to him in the first place? Aside from the fact that he had written in the key of four flats, he could recall nothing of his hurriedly inscribed notes. Figuratively and literally, the jasmine rhapsody had vanished into thin air!

Late that night he sought out a little cafe just off State street. He took a seat near the musicians—a pianist and violinist—and ordered a frugal lunch. The musicians had finished a selection as Antoine came in; now the violinist,

"That Piece You Were Picking Out," He Asked Fervently, "What Is It? Where Did You Hear It?"

while awaiting the next number, was occupying himself with picking the strings of his instrument, very softly, as tho either improvising or else striving to recall some melody.

For a time Antoine watched with mild interest; then suddenly the young composer sprang to his feet. The violinist had picked two measures of the rhapsody—Carmenetti's Rhapsody in A flat!

In another second Antoine was by the musician's side.

"That—that piece you were just picking out!" he exclaimed, fervidly. "Where did you hear it—what is the name of it?"

The violinist, doubtless recognizing a fellow artist, replied evasively, but with equal ardency: "It is superb, is it not; yes, beautiful and bewitching; but the name—ah, if I only knew the name! If I could only recall—"

"Think, man!" Antoine broke in. "You must remember where you heard it—"

"Yes—but that is all I do remember! Just two measures is all I can get; the rest is lost; I can not get it."

"Where did you first hear it?"

"Not far from here."

"When?"

"Last night."

"You mean that—"

"Listen, friend; last night, when we closed here I went to my room. I have a little corner room on the eleventh floor of the Markham Building—"

"Yes—yes!"

"I reached my room. It was about 2 o'clock. I went to my window, and looked out upon the moonlight. Then—"

"Yes—go on!"

"Then, from somewhere above I heard the strains of a violin. I would not call the player a fine performer—I, in fact, am a far better violinist—"

"Well?"

"But that piece he was playing; it was like something from some fairy realm! I listened, entranced. It was a simple air—but as elusive as it was alluring. I stood listening. 'Tomorrow,' I thought to myself—'it will come back to me; if it doesn't, I will try and find the player—'"

"I was the player."

"You!"

"Yes."

"Then you know; why ask me?"

"My friend—it has escaped me, as it has eluded you. I could not recall even two measures!"

"But surely—"

"Yes—surely I will claim it for my own again; but when—when!"

It was time for the violinist to play again; he turned away, reluctantly. Antoine went back to his table. He could not eat. He paid his check, and went back to his flat. From the entrance of the building he saw his landlord about to enter the elevator; beholding which and comprehending only too well, the young composer turned back into the street again.

"If he were only human!" he reflected, —"if he possessed a soul—I could at least explain to him how near he came to getting his two months' rent—and six months in advance as well!"

Antoine Carmenetti did not sleep soundly that night. He rolled and tossed uneasily. When morning came he arose still wearied, and listlessly put on his clothes. The lake breeze blew in at the window. Once he loved that cool, refreshing breath from the lake; now he hated it.

He went to the window and looked down from the dizzy height of window sill. Below, half as high as the Marquam, was the sand-coated roof of another building. There, in an angle of the coping, he saw the flutter of a sheet of pink paper!

Now, Antoine Carmenetti was impetuous. In another second he was out upon the fire escape and climbing rapidly down to the roof below. He reached the coping; he made his way along the sloping side; yes, it was the pink sheet which had blown from his window! Fate was smiling upon him again; he stretched out his fingers to grasp the paper—and Fate, the fickle jade, gave him a cruel slap; for at that instant a sudden puff of wind gathered up the pink sheet and hurled it forth over the edge of the coping down into the street below.

Stunned, but not despondent, Antoine climbed again to his own window, then hurried forth to the elevator, and down to the street.

Across from the Marquam, and next to the river, a skyscraper was in course of erection. The steel structural work was already up to a height even with the buildings adjacent. As he emerged out into the street Antoine saw a foreman in charge of a gang of men working upon this new building pick up a piece of pink paper. He spread it across a grimy knee, wrote some message upon it, and handed it to an attendant to take up to some men working at the top of the steel structure.

The composer called out wildly; he was too late; the message was already on its way.

Fearing refusal if he made known his resolution to follow that pink sheet upwards, Antoine calmly awaited the start of another elevator; then, before he could be stopped or questioned, he sprang aboard and was whirled rapidly skyward.

At the upper landing he got off—in time to see a foreman there crumple a sheet of pink paper in his hand and toss it unconcernedly over into the street. Antoine took the next elevator down.

In the street again, he began active search for the crumpled pink paper; he could find nothing of it. He looked upward, despairingly. The paper had lodged on a projecting beam, three stories above the street. Even as Antoine gazed upwards the wind blew it off. He beheld it fluttering down—down.

Ah, Fate was to be kind to him after all! He wanted to shout for joy, for elation! After all his worry and striving and disappointment, the pink paper Rhapsody was floating back—

A whiff of lake breeze came from around the corner. It snatched up the paper in an embryo hurricane; it whisked it here and there in riotous abandon, all unmindful of the heartaches below; it carried it over to one side of the new structure. Antoine ran along, keeping as closely beneath it as he could.

Then, straight down it came, lower, lower; straight down now, into—the river! A moment it floated serenely upon the surface, then sank from view forever.

Among the other thoughts which troubled the mind of Antoine Carmenetti the following morning was the remembrance that it was Saturday; the day for the charwoman, and her infernal sweeping and dusting.

Scarcely had the composer donned his raiment when she knocked at his door. She smiled at him cheerily and wished him good morning; he let her in, but made no response to her amiable greeting.

Usually, he beat a retreat while the charwoman completed her work of devastation and disruption; today he merely retired to the back room, like Achilles to his tent.

After a few moments, he went back to get his violin. As he entered, he saw the charwoman holding up a piece of paper of familiar pinkness.

"Is this anythin' yuh want, professor?" she asked. "I found it in under the bed."

He sprang to her side, and grasped the paper from her hand. It was the missing Rhapsody in A Flat; the sheet he had pursued was the blank, unused one! In an instant he had the erstwhile dustdemon in his arms and imprinted a kiss upon her broad and astonished countenance. "For this, Mrs. Murphy," he exclaimed, radiantly, "you are to have a new dress; for without any doubt whatsoever, you are the finest woman I ever knew in my life! Now—beat it; and don't you show up here for a week; the dress'll be here for you next Saturday!"

Was the Rhapsody in A Flat a success? Ask the violinist in the little cafe off State street how many times a day he played it by request! Ask the publishers who began falling over themselves to obtain anything composed by a certain Signor Antoine Carmenetti! For that matter, ask the owner of the Marquam Building, who received payment for a certain flat on the top floor six months in advance.

You wouldn't need to ask Signor Antoine Carmenetti himself; all you would need to do would be just to peek in upon him some night, sitting there in the moonlight by an open window, playing softly the Rhapsody in A Flat—and, perhaps, reflecting:

"Thank the Lord I got it back again; thank Him—and the charwoman—and the little dream-maiden by the jasmine vine!"

Lester's Letter

By John Elkins

[Copyright by W. G. Chapman.]

MRS. JOHN LESTER picked up the morning's mail which had just been slipped under the door of the apartment. One letter in unmistakably feminine handwriting she started to open when she saw that the address began with "Mr." instead of "Mrs.," so she stopped and looked curiously at it, trying to recall the chirography of her various friends, but finally deciding that th's was entirely strange to her. She handed it to her husband with a puzzled and expectant air. She thought he would at once tell her from whom it came. But he read it hurriedly, thrust it back in the envelope, and said nothing. It seemed to her an anxious look came into his eyes. He did not leave the letter lying on the table, but put it carefully in his pocket. All these things Grace Lester observed. It is natural when one loves very deeply and dearly to notice in the one loved the slightest detail that seems to touch a deep spring of feeling. With such a love there is often a jealousy which is quickly aroused.

She saw he was not going to explain. She could not bear the suspense, so she spoke.

"I see," she smiled, "you have a letter from a lady."

"Yes," he answered. Then seeing she was looking at him as tho expecting an explanation, he added: "It's a woman who wants to know about insurance rates."

"It s strange she did not write on business to your office."

"Yes," he answered, picking up the morning paper as tho he wished to dismiss the subject.

"Do I know her?"

"I don't know," he answered with some irritation.

"Let me see the letter, and I can tell."

"Why in the world do you want to see a simple business letter?"

"Because I do." Her lips were trembling, and her voice a bit unsteady.

He looked up from his paper, and spoke with increased irritation.

"See here, Grace, if you hadn't been so infernally suspicious, I'd have let you see it. But I don't intend to now."

"If it had been just business, you'd have let me look at it first."

Her lips no longer trembled, and her voice was defiant.

"Very well—think what you like. But I tell you I'm tired of this eternal nagging. I'm not going to stand it!" And he flung out of the house.

Grace sat for some minutes staring in a vacant way at the wall. Then she began to sob, and the tears welled up and trickled down her cheeks. After this upheaval of emotion she began to think. He had accused her of "eternal nagging." Was it true? She remembered once looking up the meaning of the word. It was: "To scold or find fault with continually." Was she doing that? She didn't think she had, but she meant to watch herself hereafter. Still that did not altogether excuse his conduct that morning. She told herself that if she had not noticed a change in him for some months she would not have been so suspicious.

They had been married only three years. It seemed a very little while for happiness to last. She loved him very deeply; her whole life was bound up with his. Was this the end? If he was caring for some one else there was little use in trying to win him back. She had always thought that.

When John Lester left the house that morning he did not take the subway, as he usually did for his downtown office, but he boarded a surface car, and left it at one of the fine cross streets about a mile from his home.

Phyllis Bert met him delightedly. She was dark-eyed, dark-haired, with a large full mouth, and very red cheeks. She was handsome in a high-colored rather coarse-grained way, with ever ready launcher, and fullness of animal life. She had come to New York ostensibly to study art, but had found the metropolitan whirl rather more alluring than the study of drawing.

"O Jack!" You darling! To come so soon!" she cried, meeting him.

"Phyllis, why in the world did you write that letter to my house?"

"Did she open it?" she asked, now thoroly frightened.

"No, but it made a scene."

"Oh dear! I never thought. I wanted to see you before you went to the office, and I didn't dare 'phone. Did she suspect anything?"

"Suspect? I should say she did. I got a nagging to beat the band."

"You Wouldn't Dare Do That."

"Well, she'd find something else to scold about if it wasn't that. You say she's always at it," said the girl.

"Yes, she is; Grace has changed. We used to be so happy." He spoke in a disconsolate, regretful way as tho loath to part with the love of those years.

But Phyllis was thinking only of her own love for this man. She had never thought much about anything further than the gratification of her own desires. To lead John Lester back to a renewed allegiance to his wife would never enter her mind. That he was married, and even owed such an allegiance had not occurred to her.

"If you are not happy, and you know you are not, why don't you put an end to it? You will yet—why not now?"

"You mean a divorce?" he said.

"Yes, of course."

"Phyllis!" he cried out, "you've made me forget my troubles lately. You've been wonderful to me!"

"I want to stay wonderful to you, Jack—always—forever." Her voice was cooing, full of meaning, and he caught her hands, looking in her eyes.

"Phyllis, I can't give you up! But I can't take this step just now."

"Why not?" she urged.

"For many reasons—not just now."

"If you loved me you would."

Seeing the slight frown her words brought she went on to make him forget with the many arts of allurement she knew so well. As he rose to go he said: "I am going to ask of you a favor. I want you to sit down there at the desk and write me a short business letter, asking about the rates of insurance."

"What for?" she asked blankly.

"I want to put it in the envelope you sent, and if my wife asks again about the letter I can show it to her."

"What? Do you want her to see my name, to begin to suspect me?"

"No," he answered, "you need not sign your own name, any name will do, so long as the handwriting is the same as that of the address."

"So you want me to lie, and you mean to, too. I never thought you'd do that."

He dropped his eyes before the accusation in hers.

"I've got to do it," he answered. "I want at least peace."

"No!" she cried. "You want more! You want her to care for you! You want her love!"

She was like a fury now when she seemed to see the man she desired slipping from her grasp.

"No! No! No!" she reiterated. "Do you think I will help you to make it up with her? If I meant to you what you do to me, you wouldn't ask it. You'd be glad that this meant the final break—that it gave me to you."

"But just now—for her peace of mind——"

"What do I care for her 'peace of mind?' I'm thinking of what you mean to me."

"So you would rather she should see your real letter, see what you wrote, have your name ringing thru the town in a scandal——"

"No! No!" she broke in. "You wouldn't dare to do that! You wouldn't dare!"

"You won't do this for me—that I'm begging you to do—when you know what it would do for me. I don't know what I might be driven to do."

She saw the dogged determination in his face; and she went slowly to the desk.

"Very well," she said, finding a sheet of paper, "what shall I write?"

He dictated the note, being careful that the date should correspond with the postmark. When she had finished he folded it carefully, put it in the envelope, and drawing out the original letter tore it in small bits, and laid them on the table, putting the letter back in his pocket.

When he arrived home to dinner Lester expected his wife would again ask to see the letter, for she seldom let go of a riddle till she had found her answer. But she did not refer to it. In fact she met him as tho nothing had

(Continued on Page 31.)

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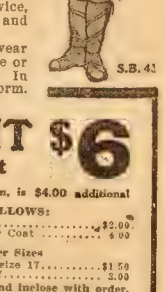

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The Tongues of Angels

By Flora A. Monty

These girls were stranded and they had to eat. The scheme they tried worked all right, but its consequences were not just what the originator planned.

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IGNORANCE that gives one a good night's sleep is blissful, especially when Knowledge blows in, bringin' doubt of any definite rest for days to come. Even if you do manage to land the rest after all, the worryin' you do is sure to compel an extra performance with the cold cream jar.

Us girls was ignorant, all right, an' I thank the Lord for it. Tho now when I think about it, the use of a little reasonin' power at the time might have spared us a fit or two—likewise some things that I don't just see we'd want to spare.

Us girls was packed tight into a small pine bed, in a room not much bigger'n the bed, upstairs in the railway eatin' house at Hortonville. This eatin' house was Hortonville's one refuge for the travelin' public, an' for all its cramped an' clamorous quarters, it was the lovin' pet of the village.

Tender dreams of Broadway an' real feeds were jizzed away by the brassy clangin' of a gong bangin' out the call of "breakfast now ready"—supposed to be for the benefit of the passengers on the incomin' train, but really to pad the purse of the eatin' house owner.

Me bein' the soubrette of the Weenan Comedy Company, I was the first to jump at the noise, jumpin' bein' my specialty.

"Oh, Lord, girls, ain't this awful!" I says, punchin' my half of the pillow I was sharin' with Anne Deckert. "You'd think in a jay town like this, they'd let a person sleep. But nix! They think they're imitatin' Chicago by burstin' with noise at this heathen hour."

Anne jerked the pillow away an' smothered me with it, hintin' that the town wasn't the only thing burstin' with noise.

Our tussle woke Hulda Bender. She was the leadin' lady, an' as such, tho she occupied the other third of our bed, she was entitled to a whole pillow to herself. Hulda Bender, as a name, don't sound real stagey, but seein' her folks had come from Holland, it gave her a clear title to them yellow braids of her'n.

Hulda used words just swell. I can, too when some one learns 'em to me, but when I'm on my own, I just talk.

"Forget the melodious trifles, girls," she advised us. "Why grumble? Three in a bed may not be our style, but let's be thankful we are in a bed." Hulda was long on hunches, an' they usually seeped into her language, tho we didn't always discover it till later.

Anne gave a right hearty jerk at Hulda's hair, an' said somewhat peevish like, "Get a new line of wheeze, Hulda. This 'All's right with the world' stuff, is hard on an empty stomach."

Our stomachs bein' thus recognized, they demanded satisfaction, so we got up an' dressed.

Pretty soon we went down the stairs. That there eatin' house hadn't ever heard of a elevator.

I must say we looked as trim an' quiet as schoolteachers, tho I ain't noticed that schoolteachers was ever much on trimness. They don't make money enough, an' they don't get time enough to stretch the money they do make. But our looks was satisfactory, even if we wasn't advertisin' next season's styles. As old Weenan was fond of boastin', "The female members of the Weenan Comedy Company would always be taken for perfect ladies." Us girls thought he could of handled his verbs a little better, but it was his show, so we didn't reprove him none.

We was hittin' it up for the dinin' room, an' as we passed the desk, the clerk crooked his yellow forefinger at Hulda, an' looked at her doleful.

"Hard luck, Miss. Hope it ain't goin' to strike you bad."

Then it was that we sensed Hulda's hunch about havin' a bed an' enjoyin' it. She opened the note the clerk handed her with an "I knew it" expression, while Anne an' me hung over her shoulders so we could all take the blow together. It said:

"Dear Girls:—

"This show and money has been simply a dream combination. I paid your board, even to breakfast this morning. Dry your tears and flit to the herbage. We're traveling the box-car route to Chi.

"WEENAN."

And they were! Weenan, the leadin' man, the comedian, an' three other male members of the troupe—gone an' left us stranded.

"Some stirrin' little existence, this," says I. "I always said Weenan's promises was goat's wool. May I never live to see the day when I'll trust another man."

"Muffle it!" snapped Anne. "We've heard you before. Weenan's a prince compared to old Ruoff on our last bump circuit. Paid for our bed an' breakfast, did he? Let's drink to him with Hortonville coffee," an' she took up the march to the dinin' room.

That dinin' room was a jay of a place. It had a big lunch counter where the railroad fellows bolted their pie an' coffee, an' kidded the waitress between swallows. I did hear as how that lunch counter was a real thrivin' matrimonial bureau, too, an' that there was always a waitin' list of girls ready to step in an' rake a fling at the way to them men's hearts.

Then there was three tables where passengers an' the general public could sit, an' pay fifty cents for what the railroad fellows got for a quarter. Must pay somethin' for style, you know, tho for myself, I don't think a chair is in it with one of them high stools.

Well, we consumed the grub, an' hunted for crumbs on the tablecloth. We wasn't takin' no chances on future hunger when it was possible to stave it off.

Just as we was prepared to be weighed down again with the miseries of our condition, Hulda smiled. Hulda was a rare smiler, an' if she could land one of them looks on the German army, every man Fritz of 'em would be trottin' at her heels.

"Girls," said Hulda, relieved like. "I've solved our problem. Let's act for the movies."

"Movies—in Hortonville! People joked in years gone by, Hulda. Trot out a little sense." Anne could be quite frizzlin' on occasion.

"There is sense to this—and cents, too, if you'll follow my plan. Movie actresses act—and say nothing. We'll do likewise, get some fun, some good training, and, best of all, some money. Listen," an' she trished out her little scheme.

My feelin's sprouted feathers right then an' there, an' I begun to count my gold.

"Just give me half an hour with the editor of that Hortonville Gazette, Hulda. He's the one guy that applauded us last night, tho I s'pose that was because he had a free ticket. I sung my 'Lovin' Man' solo right at him, an' he got a real pretty pink under his eyes. I'll saunter down for a visit, an' here's bettin' that I do my bit!" I seemed to be nursin' one of Hulda's hunches for my own, this time, for I was some confident.

"Thought you wasn't ever goin' to be caught trustin' another man, Bess?" Anne grinned at me real mean.

"I shudder to relate," I tells her, "that this trustin's all goin' to be on the other side. I'm just goin' to invest in a little human nature." I hitched my hat so it looked jaunty, an' off I went.

It seems that while I was gone, the eatin' house clerk confided in Hulda again.

"Say, Miss," he says in a tone like a plain clothes man was on his trail, "nothin' of yours in them trunks, was there? Mr. Weenan said he was called away so sudden he hadn't time to take 'em, so would leave 'em here to be sent on later. We're goin' to have 'em taken to the store room, but——" here he gazed around cautious, "but if you'd like to look thru 'em first, I s'pose it'd be all right."

"Why, no—yes, yes, I do." "I will." Hulda had another hunch.

Once in the room where the trunks were, she got 'em open all right. She ransacked one, while Anne dug thru the costumes an' grease paints an' properties of the other, an' at the bottom she found a box that made her squeal.

"Look! Look! We're made!" an' she showed her find. They locked the trunks an' rushed back to their room huggin' each other all the way upstairs.

In the course of an hour I drifted back feelin' kind-a chesty cause I had a handful of cards.

"Lord, that was easy!" I couldn't help boastin' some. "That editor soaked up my story like a sponge—an' say, he's a man angel when it comes to bein' a friend to the poor afflicted in distress. Get this!" an' I waved a card before 'em.

A DEAF MUTE IMPLORES AID. I am seeking an education as well as a living. Will you help me obtain it?

Hulda grabbed some of the cards an' scribbled below the printin':

"Buy one of my neckties—only 50 cents". On some others she wrote, "Th's excellent soap—only 25 cents."

"And now the world is ours," says Hulda. "Look, Bess, at what Anne found in the trunks. Jim's old peddler outfit." Jim had done the character parts in our company, an' he'd gone in realistic on properties. There was a couple dozen

"He Was Simply Wonderful, and, Think, I Can Never See Him Again Because of My Deception."

neckties, an' as many cakes of pink an' smelly soap.

"You shall sell the neckties, Bess, for they'll all want you to tie 'em round their manly throats. Anne, speculate in soap, an' pat the horny hands a bit." Hulda was a first class boss.

"What'll you do, Hulda?" I says, for I didn't want to see her starve.

"Oh, I'll market my smile," she answered. I might of known. An' I bet with myself right there, that she'd be runnin' in the millionaire class when we met again.

She went on a-plannin' things. "You girls can stock up again at the first big place you strike. We'll work in a circle toward Sioux City, and meet at the Holden, there, in ten days, to report our luck".

"By the way," I broke in casual. "That there editor has a Ford, an' he's goin' on a ramble this afternoon. He says he'll take us along, an' drop us off at the different towns we hit—only you girls'll have to ride in the back seat." I thought I'd have to do that much for him, seein' as how he'd been so good, tho I kinda like the scenery from the back the best.

"Bess, you're a love," they yelled at me, but I only smiled.

That was a real trip. We didn't get jolted much, an' we was all feelin' pretty gay an' giddy. At Verton, ten miles out, we dropped Hulda off, an' Anne left us at Milan, some distance further on.

When there was just him an' me left, conversation languished. We hove to the outskirts of Granton.

There wasn't any speed limit sign needed to slow down the editor's drivin' long about then, an' the only reckless thing about it was the danger of killin' the engine.

I guess his throat bothered him, for he kept tuggin' at his collar.

"Say," he come out at last, "if things don't go right, you let me know. I'm mighty sorry for you, little kid."

Ain't it funny what a tomato red color some of these prairie fellows can acquire all of a sudden? But just to keep him company, I blushed, too.

"Well," I remarked, "you're some sport, for a small town guy."

What he answered wasn't words—just a noise low down in his throat. We just sat an' gazed ahead till the Ford stopped at the steps of the Granton House, which wasn't a bad imitation of a hotel.

"Good-by," he managed to whisper to me. "I mean it."

The dust choked me then, so I didn't say nothin', but just shook hands like a man. I come pretty close to believin' him, an' for a minute I wasn't sure I wanted to succeed in my sellin'—just to try him, you know.

He had kind-a determined lookin' shoulders as he drove off down the street, but I had life before me, so I had to get busy.

I struck into the first likely lookin' place—the office of the city attorney. The official himself was present—a real huge young man with a smile that took in the whole world, an' put you safe right off.

Like a flash it come to me that he looked newly married. You could tell he'd always had a natural politeness for women folks, an' just now it was at the top of the flagpole.

I ain't bad lookin', but I knew he was comparin' me with his wife, with her several points ahead.

He read my card, an' his smile got pinched. He was thinkin' how awful it'd be if his beloved should ever be in want. He turned pale an' bought a necktie, refusin' the change from his dollar bill. Lucky he did, for I only had 20 cents. I smiled my thanks an' backed out, an' reckoned I might soon be able to buy a subscription to the Hortonville Gazette.

The First National Bank was in the same block, so I sauntered in like I was a valued depositor.

The cashier was young an' had all the looks he needed. He had a taste for girls, too—quite cultivated. His day's work was nearly done so he had nothin' to do but be pleasant. He could be that all right. He bought a necktie, an' I helped him put it on. He acted kind-a pleased with himself as he wore it, an' I honestly hated to leave him.

I drifted down the street, tho, an' into the Variety Store. The proprietor come forward brisk an' business like. I gave him a card an' looked pensive. On a rack overhead hung dozens of ties, first cousins to my stock. They were marked 25 cents, but he paid me 50 cents for one of mine so cheerfully that I tied it on extra nice.

An' that's the way it went. The young men of that town were spenders. I bet church fairs thrived in Granton. By evenin' most of the males in that vicinity were wearin' flaming brilliant neckwear. I expect after they'd discussed it with their women folks that night, that most of 'em went back to home-knitted ties an' thought of me only when they were alone.

I've learned since how the citizens of

Granton regularly respond to the calls on their sympathy.

Three or four days after I left, it seems that the city attorney was on his way up town, hummin' "Love's Old Sweet Song," an' lookin' rather radiant. He was tryin' to crowd a practical corner into his mind, an' remember what his wife told him to order for the house, an' he wasn't noticin' folks along the way, to speak of.

A stunnin' young woman headed him off by a mud puddle, so he had to stop. She was tall, an' her eyes was compellin'. She stuck a card in his hand, an' he gleaned the fact that another deaf mute was implorin' aid, this time thru the medium of 25-cent cakes of soap.

He gasped an' thought of the necktie. His wife had made him explain about that. But he was sure tender-hearted, an', bein' a lawyer helped him think up excuses. He recalled that he was now a householder, an' it was his duty to keep the family residence stocked with supplies. So did his duty by himself an' Anne.

Anne made the business section of Granton redolent of soap that mornin'. Bein' a woman, she didn't waste no time callin' at the homes. An' the funny part of it was that the fellows that bought the ties reflected that cleanliness was desirable when suggested in such a pleasant form, an' they bought Anne out, without delvin' much into the cause of her misfortune.

I'm on the inside of the rest of it, too, so I'll just pass it on.

On Monday of the next week, John Winton, that young bank cashier, was on the train comin' from Rest Haven, a country summer resort at a little lake close by.

He hadn't been so terribly rested at this place, as a bunch of girls had out an' out angled for him. He didn't hanker none to be angled for. He knew what to expect from life an' love, an' he knew he could get it when he wanted to. A fellow that could swing business deals like he had, could surely swing a woman's heart when he met up with one he decided to crave. He didn't intend to be captured unbeknown. He closed his eyes an' leaned back so he could be bored in comfort. Then he opened 'em up in a hurry.

The noise that disturbed him wasn't a quarrel. It was a zippin' one-sided argument. The conductor was haranguin' a innocent lookin' girl in two languages at once. There never was no doubt of it; Hulda was prime at lookin' innocent. She was little, an' the yellow of her hair was so real you took her all on trust—that is, every one did but the conductor. He had his job to think of.

"Very well," he exploded. "You get off at the next station!" an' he stalked down the aisle with what might of been dignity if the train hadn't jerked so.

Hulda watched him go, an' smiled. She smiled straight into John's eyes, an' the barricades around his heart crashed down with a flop that made him nervous, for he knew right then an' there he could never build 'em up again.

Bein' well bred an' polite, he wasn't good at hatchin' up excuses to speak to strange young ladies, so all he done was to sit an' stare, knad at himself for not offerin' help when she was havin' trouble about her ticket.

As the train stopped at Granton he stooped for his bag, an' what did he see upon gettin' up, but that there conductor urgin' Hulda down the aisle. They reached the platform just ahead of him.

The printer of the Granton Times was at the depot, an' he had to know just where John had been an' why, an' by the time he got thru, Hulda was gone.

It seems that John made several mistakes in cashin' checks that mornin'. He short changed the bank's most penurious customer in a way that made things look dark for a moment. He pacified the angry one an' pondered on the dark spots in his own life, an' then, all at once, the sun shone.

There She was in the door. He give her a regular 'Welcome Home' smile that might of meant most anything, an' did.

Funny about a pencil an' piece of paper, ain't it? Combine 'em just right, an' you can knock over worlds with 'em. I bet the editor of the Hortonville Gazette was handy with 'em. Some folks can write down on paper the things that are in their eyes, easier'n they can say 'em with their tongues.

Well, Hulda, she scribbled a touchin' little story about herself, an' slipped it over to the cashier. As he reached for the pad his fingers touched hers, an' them two folks was a world all their right then, tho they didn't neither of 'em have the sense to realize it at that moment.

Say! The next half hour crackled with double meanin's. That cashier was some thinker, an' he wasn't afraid to say so when it come to writin'. Hulda hadn't the heart to stop him, an' felt it only just for her to meet him half way. They used up several sheets of paper, an' the cashier wrote it out plain that altho two other girls, likewise voiceless an' deaf, had visited that town the week before, it wasn't in either of 'em to take hold of a fellow like she could.

Lucky he misunderstood Hulda's blush, then. That was her first hunch that they had all bungled an' was doin' the same territory. But John, he didn't seem to suspect there was anythin' wrong with it.

Hulda intimated it was time for her to be goin', but John put out a determined hand an' scribbled her an invite to dinner. An' tho she knew better, Hulda accepted it an met him at the hotel at the right hour.

That meal was tryin' an' unique to both of 'em. John was divided between bein' pleased with himself as a benefactor, an' bein' miserable because this beautiful girl had been dealt such a blow by nature.

Hulda couldn't decide whether she hated herself as a horrible wretch for bein' untruthful an' deceivin kind hearted young men, or whether she was just an instrument of Fate an' couldn't help her actions. She concluded the last point of view was less wearin' on her nerves, so she just used her eyes an' her smile an' her writin' pad an' acted happy.

John got a burst of emotion; an' offered to have her throat an' ears examined by his doctor brother. Hulda hadn't confided in him that her case was hopeless. She indulged in the luxury of two real tears then, because she begun to sense what she was up against.

The two of 'em was real unhappy, even if this state of affairs wasn't over half a day old. They parted at the dinin'-room door, as Hulda had composed a sentence about her bein' tired an' needin' rest. John went off to work, full of regrets, an' vowin' to see her as soon as bankin' hours was over.

But he didn't. Hulda had plenty of sense, even if she hadn't been usin' it much that mornin', an' she took the 2 o'clock train to Sioux City—bayin' her ticket.

Long about 5 o'clock John set out to scour the streets of Granton, an' he found the job disappointin' an' fruitless. He wasn't a bad trailer, tho, an' somethin' led him to the depot.

Beautiful young deaf mutes wasn't so common in Granton, spite of the recent influx, but what the station agent could remember sellin' a ticket to one that afternoon.

As I said before, John was a wise one. He remembered some important business the bank was puttin' thru in Sioux City, an' thought it would be good policy to give it his personal attention.

John wasn't hurt with any need to work, havin' several pieces of land around, an 'enough money to beat the high cost of livin', so he picked his vacation for them, without worryin' whether he'd get excursion rates anywhere an' back.

There was another train to Sioux City about 6 o'clock, an' he took it. "Took" is right, for if strong thinkin' has any effect like some religions claim, his thoughts pepped up that old steam engine several extra miles an hour.

He knew why she left town. He was as sure of it as if she said the words, 'cause sometimes you know things without there bein' any reason for you knowin' 'em, an' they're always more right then, than at any other time. Hulda read, an' that was why she fled! Good hunch, too!

Just as luck would have it, the high toned hotels was all full when John landed in the city that night, so he registers in at the Holden, which is quiet an' respectable, an' softer hearted when it comes to chargin'.

There was a transom between his room an' the one next to it; an' some giddy females, so he told it afterward, was havin' a merry time on the other side of the wall, judgin' from the screeches that come thru.

John didn't like that, tho it wasn't none of his business. But it did seem to him that some women in the world was too light hearted an' light minded to play their chosen part on this cruel sphere. He smoked a cigar in silence, settin' there in the dark, an' reflected that life was mostly "ain't."

He wasn't aimin' to grasp the conversation that floated thru to him, but when a jolly voice says, "Now, Hulda, let's hear your adventures," he set up. The name "Hulda" meant much to him, an' for the sake of his own Hulda, all who bore that name should be entitled to due reverence from him—meanin' that that was his excuse for listenin' now.

"Well, I went to Granton, too!" The voice was a sweet, trilly one, an' under other circumstances could of tricked a man's heart into a extra jump or two. Then come some laughin' an' talkin', an' John froze right into his chair.

This Hulda who could speak, had been in Granton! She had been in Granton! She—

Right then John forgot his Christian trainin' an' the fact that he was a 32nd degree Mason, an' he allowed his opinion of the world an' of women to be somewhat disturbed. There wasn't anythin' chivalrous mixed up in it. He got limp an' trembly, an' he kept on listenin'.

"When I learned you girls had been there, too, I was so angry to think I had gone, tho I should have remembered it was the first town you made, Bess. It was dreadfully foolish of me, tho I was more than repaid for my blunder by getting to know that splendid, kind cashier."

Anne an' me looked at each other. "At the First National Bank?" we says.

"Yes." That wasn't any make believe sigh of Hulda's. "He was simply wonderful to me, and think, I can never see him again, because of my deception."

Her voice sounded like it had a headache, then.

"Flutter off those blues, Hulda. Maybe his soul's non-shrinkable, but if not, Weenan's found us and wired for us to come to Chicago," says Anne.

"But he was so nice!" Hulda would of made a swell convert at a revival meetin' then, she was that depressed.

Well, anyway, in that other room was John. He wasn't limp any longer. He had been duped, an' as a man he was goin' to resent it. He rose up in his wrath, an' put his cigar on the washstand. He brushed his hair an' fixed up his tie, for he intended to face that deceitful young woman an' show her where to head in.

He was so mad he shook, but between beats of anger, his heart kept a-sayin', "She thinks you are so nice."

He marched out into the hall an' beat a rat-a-tat like the report of a cannon, on the door of the room where us girls was. Maybe you think we didn't get quiet. We never thought of any one bein' around.

Clappity-clap, he pounded again, an' while he was wonderin' who our urgent caller was, Hulda opens the door to see, an' we was all struck dumb again.

Hulda had on that pale blue dressin' gown, an' she sure looked like a made-to-order wife.

John looked at her madly, but it was a madness of love an' not of anger.

"I heard you," he says, just as he intended. An' then he kissed her, which if it wasn't what he intended, was what he wanted.

"Thank God for it all!" he exclaims reverent.

Hulda acted so content that I sauntered up to the door an' gazed at 'em a minute.

"H-m-m!" I says. "Looks like you've taken root in the prairie, too, Hulda. Well, come over an' see us some time."

"Us?" questioned Hulda, never budgin' from the pleasant circle of John's arms.

"Yes, us," I tells her. "I'm goin' back to Hortonville. I guess I could put a little jazz in that there Gazette. Ideals are all right, an' I admire the folks that has 'em, but you got to serve 'em up syncopated, these days, in order to get the public to dance to 'em."

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THE CONQUEROR

By Lewis H. Kilpatrick

"Myrtle," He Pleaded, "Tell Me, Little Girl, Do You Really Love Him?"

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HICKY dropped off the slowly moving freight with the awkwardness of the unprofessional, got unsteadily to his feet and looked about him thru the rain drenched night. The stamp of the wanderer was upon him. Not the home-hating, travel-thirsty wanderer, but the man who loved his home and had lost it; who craved the glow of a woman's eyes, the prattle of children's tongues, yet was denied them.

The bleary lights of a little town shone down the track a few hundred yards away. From a group of cabins in the distance came the melancholy chant of negro voices; a puff of wind brought the humid fragrance of jasmine and magnolia. Hicky's dazed senses revived. He buttoned his coat closer over his chest and started down the track toward the town.

On the outskirts he paused before a new frame building, bearing the gilded sign Dugan's Cafe, and cautiously peered thru the plate glass window. The only occupant, a large, ruddy faced man who was polishing tumblers behind the counter, was unfamiliar to Hicky. With a relieved sigh he pushed open the screen door and entered.

"Nasty weather we're having, ain't it?" The sanguine proprietor accompanied the remark with a searching glance at his customer.

"How's that?—er—yes, it is nasty, very disagreeable indeed," mumbled Hicky. He seated himself on one of the stools before the lunch counter. "Give me scrambled eggs, country ham, corncakes and coffee, please."

Dugan had completed his analysis; the lean intelligent face, tired gray eyes, clothes cheap but not exactly shabby, and the absence of jargon in the few words that Hicky had spoken, marked him as above the tramp class. Dugan decided to risk his patronage, and began to prepare the order.

"Stranger in these parts?" he inquired as he set the steaming dishes before the customer.

Hicky greedily gulped half the cup of coffee before he answered.

"Almost a stranger," he said with reluctance.

"Wal, I ain't been here long myself; just started business about a year ago.' Dugan watched the man as he silently devoured the food; saw the color return to his pallid cheeks as his famished body began to assimilate the nourishment. "Know anybody in this burg?"

"Y-yes—that is, I used to know somebody," replied Hicky. Then he gathered courage. "There once was a fellow here by the name of McNab. Ever hear of him?"

"McNab—McNab—" Dugan squinted thoughtfully. "Why, of course, I've heard of McNab! The town was still full of tales of him when I first came here. But now, I reckon, everybody except his wife's forgotten there ever was such a man. Judging by the way young Doc Wilton's a-courting her, it won't be long before she forgets him, too."

"Young Doc Wilton—courting her?"—repeated Hicky. His body had responded to the much needed food, but his mind was yet clouded.

"Yep. Ye see, McNab was some sort of a dope fiend, but his wife didn't know nothing about it till after they was married. Then, according to what folks say, he got to mistreating her and spending all his money on the drug, until finally she give him his walking papers and told him to git. The house they lived in was hers, and somehow she managed to scrape together enough to start her a millinery shop. By running that she's made a pretty fair living."

"She doesn't live alone?"

"That's what she does. As I was saying, tho, young Wilton's doing his best to make things different for her. But it seems that she ain't quite ready to be tied a second time by the holy halter of matrimony. She's almighty good looking, too, I tell you; only about 25 or 26, with big brown eyes and curly hair—Lord! I don't see how any man could 'a' mistreated that kind of a woman. Only a brute would 'a' done it."

"You're right, sir." Hicky nodded slowly. "Only a brute would have done it!"

He pushed aside the emptied dishes, drew from his pocket a few coins of modest denomination, and paid his bill. Then with a determined snap of his jaw, he strode with regained strength to the door—while Dugan looked after him, wondering.

The drizzle had stopped when Hicky again stood on the brick sidewalk before the restaurant. A full moon dipped in and out of the scudding clouds, flooding the deserted streets of the little town with soft blue light. The clock in the courthouse tower, two blocks away, struck ten.

Hicky glanced about to assure himself that he was alone. Then, pulling his slouch hat farther down over his eyes, he made his way thru a nearby alley and into a tree-bordered avenue beyond.

At last he stopped before a cozy white cottage, partly hidden by shrubs and blossoming flowers, and crouching in the shadow of the fence, he listened. Voices came from the dark veranda; one a woman's, the other that of a man. Hicky crept around to the side gate, entered, and found cover behind a large lilac bush a few yards from the veranda.

"Myrtle, why play this game any longer?" pleaded the man's voice. "Why put me off this way, merely thru a distorted sense of loyalty and duty to another?"

"You know why, John," quietly replied the woman.

"But it's an injustice to me, an even greater injustice to yourself," persisted the man. "You are young, beautiful, in the prime of life—yet here you live day after day with a phantom millstone about your neck, chained by imagination to an obligation that ceased to exist two years ago. I say, it's wrong, wrong to us both!"

The woman was silent. Above them the moon had won its race with the clouds and now shone brilliantly, suffusing the veranda and yard with fairy twilight. Hicky could make out the two figures. They were seated together in a suspended porch swing; the man turned so that he could watch the face of the woman, while she stared straight in front of her, one bare elbow resting on the arm of the swing, her chin in her palm.

The man was tall, broad shouldered, clean cut; nervous with boyish eagerness to win his point; every attitude and gesture bespeaking worship of the woman at his side.

"Listen, darling, won't you please be reasonable just this once?" he begged, reaching for her hand. "You had ample grounds for divorce before that creature left you. Now you can obtain a decree with even less trouble. Cruelty, non-support, desertion—"

"I know, I know," she interrupted listlessly. "But—I [illegible] yet. She hesitated. "He was [illegible] to blame, John. I should have known the man before I married him. But I was alone in the world, left with little property and no relations. When he came, a young cotton broker with an apparently safe future, so gallant, so persistent—well, I guess it was infatuation, but I fell in love with him.

"It was only a few weeks after our wedding when I discovered the viper under his skin, the cocaine fiend! At first it wasn't so bad. I pled with him and made him promise me to give it up. Then came the boll-weevil, the failure of the cotton crop, and financial reverses for most of those who speculated in it. He went under, money, morals all. Cocaine became his one solace. A wife who would gladly have worked her fingers off to support him, ceased to be considered. It may have been my fault, John, but I did the best I knew how!" A dry sob shook her delicate shoulders.

"Finally the drug drove him to the point of insanity. He would become raving mad when under its influence, and then—he would beat me." The man in the swing groaned. "During one of his lucid moments I told him that I could stand it no longer. He had lost everything we both had, except this house. I said that I would go to the depths of poverty with him if only he would take an honorable road; if only he would throw off his appetite for the drug and be a man once more.

"But it was too late. Then I ordered him out of the house, my house. I told him that I would give him two years in which to redeem himself. If at the end of that time he had conquered his weakness, he could come back to me and we would start life over again. I didn't say that he must regain his lost fortune, nor that he must raise himself in any one's opinion but mine. All that I asked was that he emancipate himself from the slavery of the drug and prove himself master of his destiny."

"And you haven't heard from him but once," said the man, to whom it all was an old, old story.

"Yes. Only once, when he was in Chicago. All he said was, that he was fighting, fighting to win for me the man I sought in him. But that was eighteen months ago."

"Eighteen months ago! Eighteen months of forgetfulness of the woman he pretended to love! Eighteen months of continued debauchery, no doubt—or eighteen months in a pauper's grave——"

"John!"

"——Eighteen months in which you have made your living with your own hands, refusing all help from me! Eighteen months in which I have watched you struggle and loved you and begged you, again and again, to be my wife! God! And still you hold out hope of that derelict drifting back into port! How much

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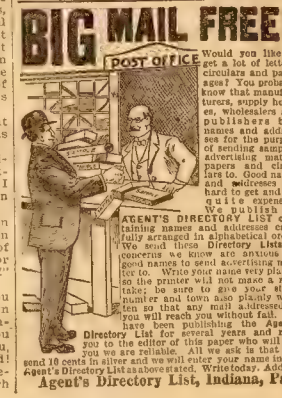

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longer, Myrtle, are you thus going to dwarf your life and mine?"

The woman's voice was low and soothing, like that of a mother calming a petulant child. "John, it will be two years tomorrow since I sent him away. If within twenty-five hours from now he hasn't returned, his probation is ended—"

"And you will get a divorce and marry me?"

The woman shook her head slowly.

"No, John. Much could happen to delay him beyond that time. He may be in another country, or without funds, or he may yet lack a few months to entirely complete his self-mastery."

"Then you will always wait?" cried the man, desperate. "You have fulfilled your promise. You have done your part. Will you still put your imagined duty before your real love?"

"Yes. For another year, until he has had even more than enough time to bring back to me his reclaimed manhood. I will give him every chance, the benefit of every doubt, for twelve months more."

The man took both her hands in his, drew her about until she faced him, and for some minutes looked steadily into her eyes without speaking.

"Tell me, Myrtle; tell me the truth," he pleaded, his voice now controlled. "If he does return to you [illegible] to his appetites, will you take him back because you love him or because—because you think it is your duty?"

The man behind the lilac bush strained his ears for every word and shading of tone that would give the answer. He thought of the cruel, tedious months of mental battle against his arch passion, the physical struggle to keep soul and body together during those two years of aimless wandering; and finally of the long, famishing ride in box cars from the North country, that he might get home to keep the appointed hour. He knew himself to be a conqueror, forever free of his former master, cocaine. Now he was to know whether that conquest had been for their mutual glory or if he had triumped too late.

Down in the hollow back of the house a mocking-bird poured its mimicry into the night. The moon was at its zenith, while in the distance a 'coon dog bayed dismally in animal loneliness.

The man in the swing drew the woman closer to him, still searching her face with anxious eyes.

"Myrtle," he repeated, "tell me, little girl, do you really love him?"

The woman freed one hand from his and gently brushed back the tousled hair from his strong forehead.

"John," she said, "you have been to me what no one else has ever been. In spite of your opposition you have been my strength, my hope, my inspiration. Without you I could not have endured these last two years. And with your help I will live thru the year that is to come. Then"—she hesitated—"then, if at the end of that time he has not returned, it shall be as you wish—as we wish. John dear, I love you better than all else that this life holds!"

Off toward the southern horizon the midweekly northbound cattle train whistled a strident warning thru the moonlit night. The trembling figure behind the lilac bush aroused at the sound. It came again. Crouching, swaying, the figure noiselessly passed out the side gate and started on a muffled run down the avenue.

Three minutes later the northbound whistled again, leaving behind it the slumbering precincts of the little town, but carrying with it an unsung conqueror, back into the world of those who live yet are dead.

The Silver Trail

"AND you, too, Brutus, Bertha Collins!" the young woman who had just come in groaned as she threw down her muff and knitting bag and opened her purse. "Here, sister, take my last quarter.'

"What makes you so peevish about lending me 25 cents?" asked the young woman who had been at home all day.

"Because, my dear sis, your touch is the end of a perfect day of it. I've been handing out money ever since I left the house this morning. Oh, it was heartrending!

"In the first place, I met Mrs. Randall on the corner and we got on the car together to go to the club. She discovered that she had no change and asked me to pay the fares down town, saying that she would pay them coming home. Of course I didn't tell her that I wouldn't be coming home with her.

"After the club business meeting a young man just returned from Turkey spoke to us about the sufferings of the Armenians. I don't believe there was a woman in the room who didn't feel like emptying her purse into the contribution basket. I was grieved to think I couldn't afford to give more than a poor little dollar, and I was just slipping it into the basket when Agatha Fleming whispered to me that she had nothing less than a $10 bill, and would I please put in a dollar for her, which I did. I knew that if Agatha didn't give to the Armenians at that particular moment she probably never would.

"Next, I was in the cloakroom when Mrs. Grayling rushed up to me.

"'Oh, I'm so glad to see you, Miss Collins,' she exclaimed exuberantly. 'Aren't you going to stay to luncheon at the club?'

"'No, not today,' I replied, and she looked so disappointed that I was really flattered.

"'I had hoped to have luncheon with you,' she said. 'I didn't expect to remain myself when I came down, but now I find I have some committee work to do this afternoon, and to tell you the truth I carelessly came away with only carfare in my bag. I'm afraid I'll have to borrow the price of the food.'

"Delighted, I'm sure,' I responded.

"'Now please don't hesitate to remind me if I forget to return this,' she said after thanking me warmly.

"Can you see me, Laura, asking Mrs. Grayling—she's worth at least $1,000,000—for my 60 cents? Hardly. Just as I left the club I met Mary Walton actually running down the street.

"'Why the wild haste?' I inquired.

"'Oh, Helen, what a godsend you are,' she exclaimed. 'I've just learned that a very dear cousin was taken to the hospital last night, and I must go to see her at once, and I find I haven't money enough with me for a taxi. Now you can lend me a few dollars, can't you?'

"I gave her the one $5 bill I had, and then watched her drive away on her errand of mercy. It must be lovely to be able to hail a car as nonchalantly as she did.

"'Anyway,' I said to myself, 'somebody nice is going to buy my lunch,' and I walked on quite gayly to meet Leonard. We had a really delicious spread.

"I told him it was not right to spend so much on foolish food, but he said we hadn't had a party for a long time, and that he knew I was getting thin on conversation, so he ordered lobster, Nesselrode pudding and other luxuries for which he knows I have a weakness. And then, what do you suppose? Well, when the waiter brought back his change after paying the check there was only 10 cents on the plate.

"'By George, that won't do,' Leonard said. 'Helen, you'll have to put up 50 cents for Joe here.'

"The waiter grinned and I endeavored to give Leonard the 50 cents with a carefree air, but I knew it was gone irrevocably. Leonard is too open handed himself ever to think of a trifle like that again. If I had bought my own lunch, I should have gone to a cafeteria and spent not more than 25 cents.

"But you wouldn't have had a banquet," laughed her sister. "You can live on the thought of that, Helen, while you're recouping your lost fortunes. I don't wonder you were cross when I took your last quarter. Are you completely busted, dear?"

"Oh, no. I still have money." Helen jingled her purse, and then smiled at the cook who had suddenly appeared at the door of the room. "I hope you aren't after cash for any purpose, Sallie."

"I sure am, Miss Helen, widout you all's got a stamp. I'se been writin' to my soldier friend and I wants him to get it befo' Sunday, and I can't find no stamp round this here place nohow."

"Go out to the drug store and buy one, by all means, Sallie," ordered Helen as she magnificently pressed three coppers into a copper colored hand. "Now I'm safe. There's a perfectly good reason why no one can borrow another single cent from me today."

A Better Suggestion.

IN OUR May 11 issue, we ran a small item in our kitchen department under the heading of "Windshield for Range." Mr. John E. Davis, fire chief of Malden, Mo., has offered a little advice regarding the making of such a shield. He says:

"I would advise using an old can or sirup bucket which had been straightened out in preference to the inflammable cardboard or paper shield."

Those who are contemplating making such a shield might do well to follow Mr. Davis' advice. It is sound and well given. We must prevent fires in order to stop them.

Etiquette.

An interested visitor, who was making her final call in a tenement district, on rising said:

"Well, my good woman, I must go now. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"No, thank ye, mum," replied the submerged one. "Ye mustn't mind it if I don't return the call, will ye? I haven't any time to go slummin' meself.'

Why It Was.

He—"Mr. Juggles is very much opposed to the single tax."

She—"Of course he is. Didn't you know he is a confirmed bachelor?"

He Knew.

"What is the scope of a submarine's greatest activity?"

"I guess it's the periscope."

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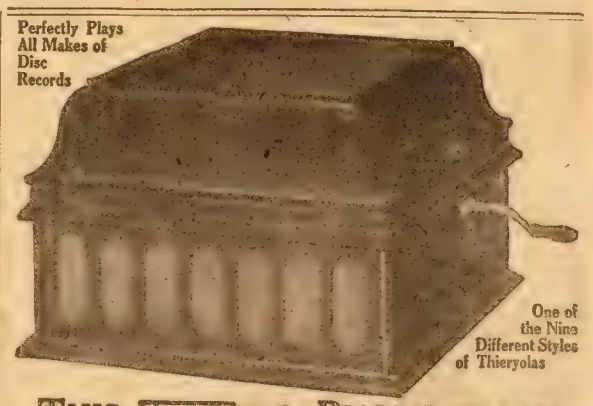

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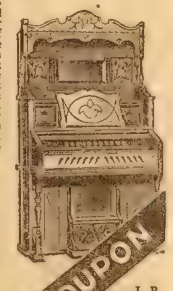

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Pendulum of Fate

(Continued From Page 13.).

had shown eighteen minutes after nine. She had looked at the clock and found it at nine-twenty.

"Why," she said, replying at last to the question, "I remember exactly—it was twenty minutes after nine."

As she spoke Barbara looked up as she had that other time, unconsciously carrying in her mind the time her little watch registered as she raised her eyes to the big clock against the wall. She stared at the clock a moment, then sprang to her feet with a cry, "Why, the clock's two minutes slow!" In the morning her watch had been slower than the clock—now it was the clock that was slow. "I'm sure the money's in the clock, or—or something, for it's two minutes slow!"

Officers trained to the following of clews tried to follow her reasoning, but all those who were strangers in the house failed to find anything extraordinary in the fact that an old clock had lost two minutes. To those who were at home there, however, it was more illuminating. They knew that the clock was positively accurate, and shared her excitement as she started impetuously toward it.

A cry arrested her midway. It came from Mills, the old gray-haired caretaker. "Stop! Stop, Miss Barbara—I done it! I attacked the old Colonel myself!" He tottered to the table and addressed the chief. "I done it! I done it!" he repeated, wringing his hands. "I picked up the club here, and—I done it!"

Excited gasps came from every one in the room at the unexpected denouement. Barbara had halted on her way to examine the clock. Mary Morris stepped forward and stood by Mills. She put her hand on his arm, and said, "You didn't, John! You know you didn't." His only reply was a moan and a reiterated, "I done it—just the way I said."

Barbara glanced from him to Mary, and on to Foster and Frere. Mary seemed surprised by Mills' protestations, but displayed none of the horror that might be expected in dealing with a self-confessed assassin. The officers seemed completely nonplused. They had not contemplated the possibility that the old man had been even indirectly connected with the crime, and despite his admission of guilt their expressions were frankly incredulous. They turned from him to the Randolph brothers, as if to glean from their demeanor some explanation of this latest sensational convolution, but both Blair and Matt appeared as startled and skeptical as were Foster and Frere themselves.

"But why is the clock two minutes slow?" Barbara, who had been diverted momentarily from her quest, broke the silence. Bent upon investigation, a few quick steps took her to the clock and she opened the door. After the barest glance at the bottom of the case she leaned inside, peering up behind the face of the old clock. There she saw a ledge that had been affixed to the inside of the case, safely out of sight, and as she reached up her hand grasped a tight roll of greenbacks—she had found the missing money!

Barbara was withdrawing her hand, clutching the money, when her eyes caught something else, and she screamed.

"Oh, Blair! Blair!" She dropped the money and covered her face with her hands. Blair was at her side in the instant, and she buried her face against his shoulder. "The pendulum!" she gasped. "It's stained with blood, too!"

The long brass bar that formed the pendulum swung from its hook as usual, but damp smears dulled its bright polish, while the disk at the end bore a darker, more gruesome stain.

Foster and Frere, in their excitement, jostled one another as they endeavored to get at this latest discovery, and the former reached out and stopped the swinging of the pendulum. He was about to grasp it and lift it from the hook when Frere interposed.

"Be careful!" he cautioned. "Don't spoil those finger prints! We'll need them!" He removed the pendulum without touching it where the hand of the attacker had gripped it, and laid it alongside the niblick on the table. "I think the old man's lying," he added, to Foster, "but those finger prints will tell the story."

Barbara freed herself from Blair's protecting arm and joined Frere by the table. The detective picked up a reading glass that lay there and stooped over the bar to inspect it closely, but he was interrupted. "Come with me!" whispered Barbara, excitedly.

Frere laid the glass down with some impatience and followed her from the room. When they returned the detective broke in rudely on the mild third degree tactics which Foster was trying on old Mills.

"There!" exclaimed Frere, and placed a third exhibit beside the niblick and pendulum. It was a jagged, triangular piece of heavy glass upon which appeared greasy, oily finger prints!

A moment's dramatic inaction, and then—"None o' that!" bellowed Officer Strong, leaping upon a figure that had taken a running start toward one of the open windows. It required the combined strength of three burly officers to overcome the lithe, wiry youth who fought silently, but with the ferocity of a wild cat.

"Oh, Jimmy! Jimmy!" his mother wailed, while Mills collapsed and fell in a heap by the table.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TRUTH COMES OUT.

THE truth all came out then. Jimmy Morris was not a hardened criminal—his crime had not been premeditated—and it did not require even rigorous police methods to wring from him a full confession.

Jimmy had decided to act on Barbara's advice, and had gone to the library to tell Colonel Randolph of the accident to the car. Just as he had stepped up to the long window on the veranda he had seen the Colonel in the act of transferring the rolls of money from his coat pocket to the hiding place in the clock, and he had withdrawn noiselessly to stand beneath the library windows. He had been unable to repair the car, he was fearful of the Colonel's wrath, and upon the moment of confessing there had come the overpowering temptation of the money—he would take just enough to "beat it."

Then he had heard the library door opened and closed, and he had slipped up on the veranda and thru the window. The room was empty and he had crossed quickly to the clock, opened the door, and was just closing his fingers about a roll of the bills when he heard the Colonel's voice immediately behind him.

Evidently the Colonel had seen Jimmy's reflection in the glass door of the clock when he had first appeared at the window, and had tricked the boy into thinking he had left the room. Fearless, without a thought of possible danger to himself, the Colonel had planned to catch Jimmy in the very act of stealing the money.

In a panic Jimmy had dropped his hand. It had hit the pendulum, and as he had involuntarily grasped at it the bar had come off in his hand. Thus armed, an instant rage had seized him and he had whirled upon the old gentleman.

Colonel Randolph had fallen at the first blow, without a sound, the blood gushing from the cruel wound in his temple, and the pendulum had dropped from the boy's hand. He had first tried to raise and rouse his victim, but believing him dead, he had set frantically to work to cover the traces of the crime. Replacing the pendulum, he had started it to swinging once more. Then his eyes chanced to fall on the bright steel of Blair's golf club as it lay upon the table. He would divert suspicion! He had grabbed the niblick and dipping it in the spreading pool of blood that was rapidly spreading beside the prostrate form, he had thrust it into the hydrangea bush outside the window. Then he had returned to the garage to await developments, for he dared not run away.

He had not touched the money again, nor had he thought of the two minutes the clock had lost while the pendulum was off the hook!

"I seen it all! I seen it!" poor old Mills confessed. An errand had brought him to the library just at the moment Colonel Randolph was struck down. "I'd a' done anything, Mary, to spare you this, and to save the boy!" he quavered, in explanation of his strange act in branding himself as the assassin.

And from that the way led to the solving of the riddle of Mary Morris' conspiracy against Colonel Randolph and the Randolph boys. For, a conspiracy it was, cunningly plotted, and promising of success but for the vicissitudes of chance against which the machinations of the cleverest conspirators cannot prevail.

Mary Morris had never sustained the relation to Colonel Randolph she had claimed, and James Morris was not the Colonel's natural son.

At the time she had come to The Oaks as a maid there was a ne'er-do-well employed in the Randolph stables, and it was he who had wronged her. To evade his responsibility he had run away and enlisted in the navy, and he had been drowned at sea on his first cruise. When he had learned of her plight, Colonel Randolph had befriended Mary and had been more than generous with her, not only assisting her in guarding her secret, but promising her that she should have a home at The Oaks so long as she might live. She would have repaid him in sorry coin!

That ne'er-do-well had been the son of old John Mills, and in expiation of his son's fault the old man had given years of dumb, dog-like devotion to Mary and to his grandson, Jimmy. He had found his happiness in making life easier day by day by numerous little services and sacrifices, and when the big moment had come he had sprung forward ready to interpose himself between her and knowledge of her boy's dreadful deed.

It had been an easy matter, therefore, when the idea of the conspiracy came to Mary, for her to persuade the old man to bear witness to the truth of the story she concocted. He was to be her "proof" when the time came for her to claim the Randolph estate—as a precaution in case of his death prior to the Colonel's she had prepared an affidavit which he had signed and sworn to.

Lawsuits have been won, and wills have been broken, with more preposterous stories, backed up by less convincing evidence! But, Mary Morris had lost her temper and told her story prematurely, to Blair. Believing the Colonel was dying, later she had repeated it at the hearing, because she did not see how any one could prove it untrue.

But even as she was sobbing it all out Dr. Graham came down from the bedroom and interrupted the proceedings.

"I have just come from Colonel Randolph's bedside," he said. "He is conscious and he will live."

CHAPTER XII.

A SURPRISE FOR BLAIR.

BLAIR RANDOLPH, having watched Barbara Byrd grow from a tiny tot into the lovely young woman whom he had looked upon as his brother's promised bride, and having learned to love her himself as only a deep, intense nature such as his was capable of loving, had gladly grasped the opportunity to immolate himself upon the altar of her happiness when he saw the effort to fasten the crime on Matt. In the stress of the moment he had not stopped to realize that the very necessity for such a sacrifice would carry with it its own futility.

His reward came when he saw Barbara after he had had a long and illuminating talk with his brother. Matt had told him in a matter of fact way that not only were he and Barbara not engaged, but she knew he was in love with another girl. Matt's need of money had been that he might go out to Colorado, where he was to have a position at a mine owned by this girl's father, and his haste to depart had been due to a desire to make the trip on the same train the girl was taking.

Blair found Barbara on the veranda of the Byrd bungalow in the cool of the June evening, with a June moon, June stars, June breezes, the breath of June roses, and all the other June properties that Stage Manager Cupid delights in.

"Babs," he said, "you know, don't you, that I have always thought that you were to be my brother's wife?"

She smiled. "That's why I got the thousand dollars from your uncle. I was tired of having—well—everyone believe that, and I wanted to help Matt get away. When I told Matt last night at the club that even if every one else did, I didn't expect him to marry me, he was so grateful he kissed me."

Blair's heart gave a great leap.

"Barbara, dearest! I didn't mean to speak now, but—I must know. Is there a chance for me? I have loved you so long and so hopelessly!"

"Stupid!" she answered, the pink color glowing in her cheeks. "Must I tell you the secret I sold the dear old Colonel?" She hesitated, and the words came in little more than a whisper, but he heard them: "I told him I would be Mrs. Blair Randolph if I ever had a chance!"

The End.

Her Luck With Her.

"BOTHERATION!" said Rosalie, as she peered into her glove box. "I've no white gloves to wear tonight, nothing but this pair with frayed fingers, and they are too far gone to mend."

"It's just like you to make such a discovery at the eleventh hour," remarked Rosalie's sister, "and it will serve you right if you have to wear that old pair."

"Oh, but I won't," declared Rosalie. "I'll telephone Reid's and they will send me a pair, special."

And she went at once to the telephone, and was assured that a pair of No. 5¾ white gloves would be sent out to her at once.

But they didn't come, and much to Rosalie's sister's satisfaction Rosalie was obliged to wear the dingy white pair with frayed fingers, which did not at all harmonize with the rose colored chiffon gown that she wore that night to the dance. "For once," remarked her sister, as they were putting on their gloves, "your luck has deserted you, but it's the first time on record."

However, Rosalie's sister spoke too soon, for Rosalie's luck had not deserted but was only a little delayed. The morning after the ball she was called to the telephone, and an unfamiliar feminine voice began making apologies.

"I'm so sorry," said the voice, "but this morning when I went to open my parcels I found a pair of gloves marked 'special' and directed to you, and I fear you must have been much inconvenienced by my negligence and the stupidity of the delivery boy."

"Not at all," declared Rosalie. "But where are you, and how may I get the gloves, if you please?"

"Why, we're your new neighbors across the street; we only moved in three days ago and we are in a terrible mess, but I'll send my son across with your gloves, if you wish."

"Oh, don't bother," said Rosalie. "I'm going across the street to mail a letter in a few moments and I'll stop at your door and get the package." And this she shortly did, tho, as her sister remarked, she stayed long enough to make a pair of gloves.

The reason for the delay was this: A very tall and good looking young soldier came to the door when Rosalie rang her neighbor's bell, and while she was declining an invitation to enter, his mother's face appeared over his shoulder and demanded that Rosalie "come right in and sit down."

"We are so lonely," she declared. "We don't know a soul in the neighborhood and probably never will, because nobody makes calls these days."

"We are very grateful to Reid's for sending your gloves to the wrong house," declared the son with a soldierly smile that quite went to Rosalie's heart, and she intimated that if the mistake had brought them any pleasure she shared their delight in it. And thus they talked on and on, and no one thought of producing the gloves.

But at last Rosalie said it must be nearly time for luncheon and she really must be going, and the soldier was sent upstairs for the gloves and he came down in a surprisingly short time bearing an absurdly small parcel. And again his mother repeated her apologies, which were echoed by her son, and again Rosalie declared that she had not been inconvenienced in the least, for of course she had other white gloves.

"But your other white gloves were not so white as the lie you told," declared Rosalie's sister when Rosalie told of her adventure.

Soldiers' romances are swift this year and the soldier in this case carried one of the white gloves away to camp.

Rosalie's sister remarked the day after the wedding: "I thought it was strange that Rosalie's luck should desert her in the matter of those gloves, but how different her life would have been if Reid's delivery boy had not made that mistake and taken the gloves to the wrong house!"

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ONE glance is enough to tell which people have iron in their blood. They are the ones that do and dare. The others are in the weakling class. Sleepless nights spent worrying over supposed ailments, constant dosing with habit-forming drugs and narcotics and useless attempts to brace up with strong coffee or other stimulants are what keep them suffering and vainly longing to be strong. Their real trouble is lack of iron in the blood. Without iron the blood has no power to change food into living tissue and therefore, nothing you eat does you good; you don't get the strength out of it. When iron is supplied it enriches the impoverished blood and gives the body greater resistance to ward off disease. Numbers of nervous, run-down people who were ailing all the while have most astonishingly increased their strength and endurance simply by taking iron in the proper form. And this, after they had in some cases been going on for months without getting benefit from anything.

If you are not strong or well you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of Nuxated Iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see for yourself how much you have gained. There is nothing like good old iron to help put color in your cheeks and sound, healthy flesh on your bones. But you must take iron in a form that can be easily absorbed and assimilated like Nuxated Iron if you want it to do you any good, otherwise it may prove worse than useless.

MANUFACTURERS' NOTE: Nuxated Iron recommended above is one of the newer organic iron compounds. Unlike the older inorganic products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black nor upset the stomach. The manufacturers guarantee successful and entirely satisfactory results to every purchaser or they will refund your money. It is dispensed by all good druggists and general stores.

The Ban of Silence

By Mary Grace Hetherington

[Copyright, by W. G. Chapman.]

WE ALL liked Djalhma—first, because he was a loyal, tireless servant; next, for the reason that he was unique and interesting. A peculiar history attached to him. He had appeared in our little village one day with a tired out chit of a girl, bronzed with the sun of far-away India, but bewitchingly beautiful in eyes and features, intelligent beyond her years, full of bustle and liveliness, a striking contrast to her close, dusky escort, who was grim of face, statuesque of form and ever silent.

The girl did the talking. They were to find Miss Eunice Mason; the child was her niece. Everybody knew Miss Mason, a humble but thrifty spinster who lived in the next town, conducting a little millinery shop.

"She is my aunt," announced the sprightly little creature. "My dear father told me she is my only living relative in all the world. We have come thousands of miles. My name is Coila Brentwood. Djalhma is my only friend. He is good, but he cannot tell you that, for he is under a ban."

"A ban?" I repeated, fully mystified, and brother Ronald, about the same age as the little girl by my side, stared in wonder, and curiosity, too.

"The ban of silence," explained Coila in her pretty, prattling way, "was placed by the Hindoo priest. Djalhma, for leaving his native land, must not speak a word, or he becomes an outcast, here," solemnly uttered the strange child, pointing upward, "where papa is. Djalhma was true to his master, my father. When the fanatics killed him and burned our bungalow, we had to flee. It was Djalhma's brother, the good Kariza, who helped."

Miss Mason welcomed her nfece and for a long time the strange child and her more strange story interested the country round. Coila speedily adapted herself to her new surroundings. There was no place for Djalhma, however, and he sought work, for he refused to leave the child to strangers. He seemed impressed with a loyal sense of sacred guardianship over Coila. We needed a man about the place and my father hired Djalhma. He never regretted the act.

Every Saturday Djalhma would don his native dress and go down to visit Coila. Miss Mason permitted it. In fact, as did all of us, she liked the humble, faithful fellow, who seemed to have no motive in life except to toil uncomplainingly for others.

Coila was 18; Ronald had grown into a young man. It was not strange that he had been attracted by the charming girl whom time had developed into a charming young lady. It began thru Djalhma taking him with him to the next town when he made his Saturday visits. As he grew older, Ronald doubled his visits. The natural sequence came about—one day he announced that Coila and he were engaged.

We were not sorry for it, altho father advised a delay of a year or two. Miss Mason died one day. This led to a peculiar situation. She had left what little she had to Coila. It was little, indeed, for there were a great many debts. Miss Mason had supported a crippled and helpless brother in a sanitarium for years. Coila assumed the responsibility of continued care of her uncle. She went about her new duties like a genuine business woman. Ronald objected to the strenuous strain, but Coila was determined.

"I could not rest if I did not clear up the debts of poor, dead aunty," she said. "It would be a sin to neglect Uncle Waldron. You must be patient, dear, and wait. I love you and I shall be—oh! so proud and happy to become your wife, but I must fulfill my duty."

"We could take your uncle with us, Coila," suggested Ronald.

"I could not think of burdening you with such a charge," resisted Coila. "No, it must be as I say. Everything will come out right if I do my best, dear."

So Ronald was content perforce and Coila went on her steady way. It proved to be a difficult way, and almost cheerless at times. Business was bad and her poor little head fairly ached over unfamiliar business entanglements. She just managed to keep clear of new debts, but the old ones hung about her neck like millstones.

Then one day came the strangest happening of all in the strange link of peculiar incidents that surrounded Coila's young life. Ronald was giving Djalhma some directions about the garden, when there entered the yard the counterpart of Djalhma. In an instant Ronald realized that this must be Djalhma's brother. The twain rushed into each other's arms—a startling greeting, for neither spoke.

Every Saturday Djalhma Would Go to Visit Coila.

Solemnly the new arrival placed his finger on his lips. He tried apparently to convey some explanation as to the cause of his appearance to Djalhma. Ronald was intensely interested. He reasoned out that Kariza, too, had come under the ban of silence. He realized that his mission, making of him an exile like Djalhma, must be an important one. Perhaps it involved the interests of Coila.

Apparently Kariza made Djalhma understand that he had a message or explanation of importance to impart. Ronald followed them curiously, and they were so excited and engrossed in their present personal affairs that his presence was unheeded.

At the rear of the garden was a cemented tennis court. Over near the toolhouse were several barrels of sand.

One of these latter Kariza proceeded to wheel up to one end of the cemented space. He threw off his outer surtout. He drew from some inner pocket a strange-appearing device. It was a sort of metal funnel, with a short handle attached. He dipped it in the sand, braced back and began making "sand pictures."

Many a time Ronald had read of persons among the denizens of India who had become experts in this line. It was marvelous, the accuracy, the fineness, the art with which Kariza prosecuted his work. Delicately, skilfully as a master painter with his brush, Kariza outlined and then filled in across the cemented space the features of a child, "a little girl.

"Coila," uttered Ronald. "It must be that."

"Her father," he added, wonderingly, as there stood out upon the unique canvas the portrait of a military-appearing man.

Then followed the outline of a ruined house, a temple and a casket, such as is used to hold treasures, and then from the folds of his robe Kariza drew forth a rusted metallic box, and threw open its cover and revealed a mass of glittering gems.

And now Djalhma seemed to understand, and Ronald, too, understood as well. After the years the stolen fortune of Coila's father had been discovered, and the honest, loyal brother of Djalhma had sacrificed his home and kin in behalf of the daughter of Col. John Brentwood, the master of his brother.

So Coila was rich and all her business troubles ended. And there was a speedy wedding. And what of Djalhma and Kariza? They would not return to their native land. Yet the ban of silence was unremoved. It was by chance that one day Ronald in the city came across a native Hindoo traveler, a priest. He told him of his mute friends.

There was a ceremonial removal of the ban of silence, paid for liberally by Ronald, and the curse removed. Djalhma and Kariza sang for joy.

Playing Safe.

"I am a cautious man," said Mr. Slowboy, "and rarely place myself in danger without taking great precautions," and he lifted out of his wagon a dry goods box and a brass kettle. "I came out here to see a match three weeks ago," the old man explained, "and during the game a redhot ball, right from the bat, struck me like a cannon shot between the eyes, bent my spectacles down, broke both glasses, disarranged my ideas, obstructed my view of the game and knocked me down. Then the catcher and shortstop ran together and stood on me, and jumped to catch the ball, and when they came down they both kicked me for getting in the way and making them miss that ball. And now I have brought along this dry goods box to sit in and this brass kettle to wear on my head."

And placidly, safely, but a little warm withal, he saw the game clear thru.

Hard Job.

Mistress—"Goodness, Bridget, where is our telephone?"

Bridget—"Mrs. Jones sent over, mum, askin' for the use av it, and I sint it over, but I had the divil's own toime gittin' it off the wall, mum."

Excellent References.

Old Gentleman (engaging new chauffeur)—"I suppose I can write to your last employer for your character?"

Chauffeur—"I am sorry to say, sir, each of the last two gentlemen I have been with died in my service."—Punch.

Automobile Contest Ends.

THE judges of the auto contest for subscriptions to The Saturday Blade and Chicago Ledger have completed their count of the votes and have found that E. B. Meadows of Alma, Ark., is the winner. Mr. Meadows is to be congratulated for his steady and successful efforts in this contest. He kept at the work from day to day, with the result that he won the five passenger Ford touring car. This is a good example for our other contest workers. It shows that steady work will win. The contest closed May 16.

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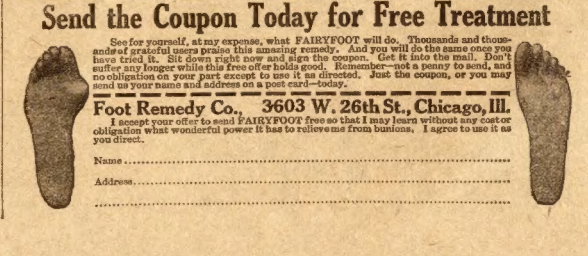

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Foot Remedy Co., 3603 W. 26th St., Chicago, Ill.

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.....

For the Woman Who Sews or Embroiders

The Art of Mending.

"A STITCH in time, saves nine," is a good old adage, and one which it would be well to observe in these days of war-time economy. Formerly, mending was considered an art. Most housewives aspired to mending their table linens and bed clothes so exquisitely that nobody could tell where the rent had been. Stockings and wearing apparel, too, came in for their share of attention.

However, in recent years there has been a change, especially among younger women. It has been much easier to obtain new hose and new clothes than to mend them carefully. We have been too busy to bother about such trifles. When a dress or stocking showed signs of wear they were discarded. The high price of wool and cotton and the scarcity of these materials must necessarily change this.

There are any number of little rules to observe to make your mending as inconspicuous as possible. A few of them are set down in the following paragraphs.

One maxim of mending, if so it might be called, is that it should be done before clothes are sent to the laundry, in order to prevent rents or holes being made unnecessarily larger. The sewing on of buttons, however, which one is accustomed to think of as a part of the mending, is an exception to this rule; most people have discovered it to be wiser to sew those on after the laundress has finished her work on the articles in need of them.

Even a torn woolen dress or coat may be mended neatly, with a little care. If no patch is needed, the rent may be darned with threads raveled out of the material; and, if done with care, it will be scarcely noticeable. Of course, the mended place must be well pressed.

If darning is impossible, one may insert a patch that need not be a disfigurement. In the first place, for the sake of neatness, the patch should, generally speaking, be cut on absolutely straight lines. A square or oblong patch is usually the most desirable, as it is less noticeable than round or triangular or odd-shaped ones. Another thing which it is important to remember is that an old garment must not, as a rule, be mended with a piece of perfectly new material but, rather, with some that has been slightly worn, tho it is perfectly whole, itself. Next it must be cut enough larger than the area it is to cover to allow for generous turnings. When the patch is ready, lay it on the torn garment, spread out flat, and be sure that it runs the same way as the goods of the garment; then baste securely in place. Fold the edges down all the way around and hem in place, then turn it over, cut away the raw edges of the hole and trim it out to the same shape as the patch and hem the turned-over edges of the patch down on the other side; not such a difficult piece of work at all, but one requiring careful attention to details. If the garment to be patched is of figured material, care must be taken to match the figure perfectly.

These directions given above refer to garments of thin materials. When a thick fabric, as a blanket, for instance, is to be patched, the process is somewhat different. One would hardly think of making anything like a felled seam of a patch on a blanket; it would be much too heavy and awkward. Cut a simple shape, and a symmetrical one, of course, and place it face down upon the wrong side of the blanket, over the worn place or hole. It should be well pinned or basted in place, then carefully and firmly attached by means of a herring-bone stitch or catstitch, using a soft thread of either cotton or wool, according to the fabric.

When the patch is fastened in place on the wrong side, the blanket should be turned over and the worn part cut away to within nearly a quarter of an inch of the patch. These raw edges of the blanket should then be catstitched down upon the patch carefully and the work pressed well. If this is done with the right sort of thread and with care and neatness, the result may be quite pleasing as well as satisfactory.

Where a gown is so torn that it must be patched, it is often possible for the ingenious woman to turn that patch into a bit of decoration, thus accomplishing two good ends at once. When there is a hole thru the elbow, for instance, a circular patch is usually the most satisfactory sort. Edged about with a little colored or self-toned embroidery, it may be made ornamental and, if such a decoration harmonized with the rest of the gown, similar circles of the material might be embroidered with silks or cottons, on other parts of the gown. If the hole comes under the arms, often three-cornered patches prove most useful, as they are thought to "give" more and thus to stand the strain on them better.

When mending a printed or figured material it is sometimes better to cut the patch in an irregular shape, in order that it may be less noticeable.

Stocking darning is not so difficult as many seem to think, provided the holes are not allowed to grow too large. Some menders like to sew around the edge of the hole with a running stitch, merely to hold it in place, but not gathering or puckering it in at all, make a neat darn by running threads back and forth the long way of the hole, and then fill in by the regular darning stitch, weaving it in and out among the long threads. Any ragged edges should be cut out and the darn woven as smoothly as can be. A darning ball is found by most workers to be a decided help in making satisfactory repairs of this sort.

When thin cotton and muslin garments are darned, it is usually wise to baste a piece of a similar fabric under the worn place and darn thru that. In the case of embroidered muslins, it is sometimes possible to conceal the mended spot by working a similar design over it. One woman mended a heavy white bed-spread, which had a slit cut thru it, by drawing the edges together and catching them firmly thru to a small piece of heavy cotton cloth and then embroidering over it all a spray of leaves, such as were sprinkled over the whole spread at intervals. So carefully did she do her work that it could be discovered only with difficulty.

To be quite satisfactory, from the point of view of neatness, the darn should be definitely symmetrical in shape.

One more precaution that the careful housekeeper will observe is to darn carefully over places that are growing thin and show signs of wearing thru in a short time. A little careful strengthening will make them last much longer and will save work in the end. As for mending materials, fine needles and threads of cotton or wool, as much like the threads of the fabric to be mended as it is possible to get them in texture, weight and color, will give the best results.

Lastly, there is an old adage, which it is wise to remember, and that is that if the mending is worth doing at all, it is worth doing well.

Abbreviations of Crochet Stitches

ch st—Chain stitch.
si cr—Single crochet.
do cr—Double crochet.
tr cr—Treble crochet.
do tr cr—Double treble crochet.
p—Picot.
sp—Space.
gr—Group.
*—Sign of repetition.

Ch st, make a loop over hook, thread over hook, pull second loop thru first loop, repeat for the length required.

Si cr, make a length of ch sts, skip 1 ch st, insert hook into 2d ch st, thread over hook, draw thru the ch st, making 2 loops on hook, thread over hook, thru both loops.

Do cr, make a length of ch sts, thread over hook, skip 3 ch sts, insert hook into 4th ch st, draw thread thru ch st, thread over hook, thru 2 loops, thread over hook, thru the 2 remaining loops.

Tr cr, make length of ch sts, thread over hook twice, skip 4 sts, insert hook into 5th ch st, draw thread thru ch st, thread over hook, thru 2 loops, thread over hook, thru 2 loops, thread over hook, thru the 2 remaining loops.

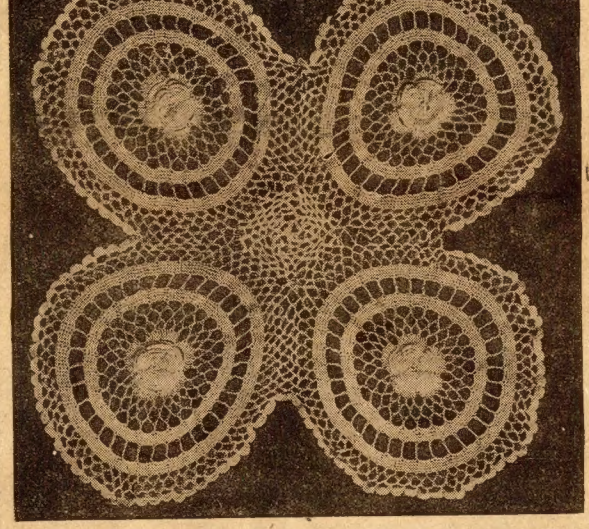
Do tr cr, same as tr cr, only thread 3 times over hook.

P, make 5 ch sts, catch back into 4th ch st, from the hook, pull loop thru.

Sp, 1 d c, 2 ch sts, skip 2 sts, forms 1 sp.

Gr, 1 d c into each st for 4 sts, together form 1 gr.

Here Is a Very Fine Rose Doily



THIS doily is so sheer and cobwebby that it could well be placed under glass for exhibit purposes. The thread used is No. 100 for the most part and No. 80 for the scallops and center connections. For this work use a very fine steel hook, and crochet tight.

Start with the rose, using 100 cotton, start with 5 ch sts, join into a circle.

First Row—5 ch sts, * 1 d c into circle, 2 ch sts, repeat * until you have 4 d c, 2 ch sts, join to 3rd ch st of the 5, forming 5 sps for this row.

Second Row—* 1 s c, 5 d c, over ch, repeat * until you have 5 petals.

Third Row—* 4 ch sts, 1 s c, catch to back of s c of previous row, forming a loop, repeat * for 5 loops.

Fourth Row—* 1 s c, 7 d c, over ch, repeat * for 5 petals.

Fifth Row—* 5 ch sts, 1 s c, repeat * for 5 loops.

Sixth Row—* 1 s c, 9 d c repeat * for 5 petals.

Seventh Row—* 6 ch sts, 1 s c, repeat * for 5 loops.

Eighth Row—* 1 s c, 11 d c, repeat * for 5 petals.

Ninth Row—* 7 ch sts, 1 s c, repeat * for 5 loops.

Tenth Row—* 1 s c, 13 d c, repeat * for 5 petals.

Eleventh Row—* 8 ch sts, 1 s c, repeat * for 5 loops.

Twelfth Row—* 1 s c, 15 d c, repeat * for 5 petals.

Thirteenth Row—* 5 ch sts, skip 2 sts, 1 s c, repeat *.

Fourteenth Row—*5 ch sts, 1 s c into the center st of loop of previous row, repeat *.

Fifteenth Row—Repeat fourteenth row.

Sixteenth Row—5 s c over each ch of previous row.

Seventeenth Row—1 s c into each st of previous row.

Eighteenth and Nineteenth Rows—Repeat seventeenth row.

Twentieth Row—10 ch sts, * skip 4 sts, 1 t c, 5 ch sts, repeat * join.

Twenty-first Row—Repeat sixteenth row.

Twenty-second, Twenty-third and Twenty-fourth Rows—Repeat seventeenth row.

Twenty-fifth Row—* 5 ch sts, skip 3 sts, 1 s c, repeat *.

Twenty-sixth Row—* 5 ch sts, 1 s c into the center st of loop, repeat *.

Twenty-seventh Row—Repeat twenty-sixth row, completing medallion, repeat for 4 medallions.

Make 3 ch sts, 1 s c into the 3rd st of loop of 1st medallion, 3 ch sts, 1 s c into 3rd st of next loop of medallion just completed, continue joining for 9 loops, then make 5 loops across 1st medallion and join the next one in the same manner, when the 4 medallions are joined break thread.

On the inside fasten the No. 80 thread, fill the space with loops of 3 ch sts, 1 s c, decreasing on each row, until 3 loops join in the center.

Of the same thread make the scallops, 1 s c, 5 d c, 1 s c over each loop around the edge.

Brightens Buttons.

IF THE pearl buttons on your waists have become scratched from frequent laundering, rub them with olive oil, cover them with nail powder and polish with chamois skin.

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Lester's Letter.

(Continued From Page 23)

happened. She told him amusing little incidents, and once, as she got up from the table for something and was passing his chair, she laid her hand on his head, stroking back his hair caressingly, and murmured: "Dear old boy, you look tired!"

For answer he pressed her hand. He didn't know just what to say. His conscience made it a trifle embarrassing for him to spend the evening alone with his wife, so he suggested they should go to the theater. John felt so pleased with himself when they came out that he took her to supper.

Lester felt really disappointed when another day went by without her alluding to the letter. He meant to bring it up himself if she did not, so he could have his little triumph. But after dinner, she said: "John, dear, I've been thinking what you said about me nagging."

"Ha!" he thought, "it's coming."

"Maybe you're right," she went on. "I—I didn't knew I was nagging. I didn't know I was. I don't want to. I wish every time you'd just shake me. As for that letter I was so foolish about—I don't want to see it. If there really is any one you love better than me—I won't keep you from her. I love you that kind of a way, John—I want you to be happy."

"Dear little woman!" he said, taking her in his arms. "There isn't any one but you!" And he meant it. His mental comparison of the two women had quite obliterated Phyllis Bert. "No," he said, "I want you to read the letter."

Her contrition made him feel more ashamed than ever. But he resolved some day to tell her the truth.

Reason for Thanksgiving.

The pessimist was suffering from rheumatism.

"Every bone in my body aches," he complained.

"You ought to be glad you are not a herring," said the optimist.

* * *

And She Can't Answer.

Henry—"I see it be ordained as the farmers should grow pigs these times. Have you got any coming along?"

George—"No, I 'aven't taken no interest in pigs much since the missus died"

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If you have hesitated to try Classified Advertising for fear your lack of experience in writing advertisements might stand in your way you need delay no longer. Just write a letter to the Classified Dept., W. D. Boyce Co., 500 N. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill. State fully what you wish to advertise and the amount of money you can devote to it. Copy will at once be submitted for your approval. Rate 30c a word. Not less than 14 words accepted.

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I WANT 100 MEN AND WOMEN TO ACT as my agents and take orders for Comer raincoats. I paid Ell Bridge $88.95 for orders taken during his spare time in one week. Cooper made $314 last month. Wonderful values. A dandy coat for $3.98. Four average orders a day gives you $2,500 a year profit and an automobile free at the end of six months. No delivering or collecting. I'll give you a sample coat and complete outfit for getting orders. Hurry. Write for my liberal offer. Comer Mfg. Co., Dept. B-123, Dayton, Ohio.

AGENTS—SOMETHING NEW. USED BY everyone and in demand. An article of merit. Just the article for our boys at home and over there. Big money in it for you. Quick seller. Great repeater. Money back if not satisfactory. Send 60c for sample and full particulars today. Address The Thden Co., Machias, N. Y.

AGENTS WANTED—TOLIVER PUNCTURE-proof inner tubes sell easily—our agents make $6.00 to $50.00 a day net profit—no competition. If you wish to establish a business of your own with unlimited possibilities for profit, write us for complete details. Toliver Tube and Tire Co., 735 Toliver Bldg., Denver, Colo.

$50 WEEKLY AND UP SELLING MEXICAN Diamonds. Exactly resemble genuine; same rainbow fire; stand tests; sell at sight; repeat orders. Write quick for sample and offer free. Mexican Diamond Importing Co., K J Las Cruces, New Mexico.

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U. S. FLAGS, U. S. SERVICE FLAGS, AND all other "Overseas" items that sell quick. Catalog free. Luttrell Co., 320 River St., Chicago.

AGENTS — I'VE A NEW SOAP GAME that's a dandy. New stuff; 100% profits. Sample and full layout free. Write quick. Jacksonian Co., Dept. 21, St. Louis, Mo.

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MEN, WOMEN, 18 OR OVER, WANTED IMmediately for U. S. Government war positions. Thousands clerical positions open, $1000 month. Easy work. Write immediately for list positions. Franklin Institute, Dept. R 27, Rochester, N. Y.

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WANTED—AMBITIOUS MEN TO OPEN A cleaning, dyeing and pressing shop in every neighborhood. We teach you how. No capital or experience necessary. Write to-day Wm. A. Hopkins, Box 1212, Winston-Salem, N. C.

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FIREMEN, BRAKEMEN, BAGGAGEMEN, 8 hours, $140. Colored porters wanted everywhere. Experience unnecessary. 686 Ry. Bureau. East St. Louis, Ills.

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YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO JOIN NEW OIL company with first big producing well completed; another drilling in famous Goose Creek field where many wells come in producing 3,000 to 12,000 barrels daily, making fortunes for owners. Over 100 acres leases in this and North Texas fields; managed by successful business men; highest references; second issue securities now selling $15 share very limited time. Write for free maps of oil fields and prospectus with views of wells. Imperial Petroleum Company, Suite 200, First Nat'l Bank Bldg., Houston, Texas.

$2 PAYS FOR 100 SHARES BY RETURN mail, and also holds for 30 days, 1000 shares of Money-Back Oil Co. (at present price), now selling in Wyoming, on 19 well joint producing and refining agreement. 3 producing wells guaranteed under money-back agreement issued by two national and two state banks, Money-Back Oil Co., 253 Foster Bldg., Denver, Colo. Agents write.

$20 BUYS DEED TO LAND, ALSO INTEREst in oil well that should pay you $100 for every dollar invested. Easy payments $2 monthly; complete information free. Address Texas-Gulf Company, 1100 Union Bank, Houston, Texas.

LATEST WYOMING OIL MAP SENT FREE. Small investments making millionaires. Write Midwest Investment Bureau, Boston Block, Minneapolis, Minn.

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TOBACCO OR SNUFF HABIT CURED OR no pay. $1.00 if cured. Remedy sent on trial. Superba Co., TC, Baltimore, Md.

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COFFEE—POUND FREE TO ADVERTISE package, 10c postage. Willett Adjusters Association, Louisville, Ky.

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THE ROAD TO HEALTH—THIS BIG INstructive book mailed free in plain wrapper. Diseases of the blood, stomach, kidneys, bowels, liver, bladder, heart, nerves and skin permanently relieved by a simple home treatment given under skilled advice by graduate physicians. Bank and other endorsements. No harmful drugs. Thousands testify, many of whom had been told they could not live. Save further medicine and hospital bills. You must be entirely satisfied or treatment costs nothing. No matter what your ailment write today to Dr. W. J. McCrary, Dept. 100, Long Beach, California, for your copy of this wonderful book. Send no money. It is free.

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OWN A FARM HOME. HERE'S A CHANCE for independence for wage earners and farm renters. Investigate our low terms for small or large tracts in Michigan's fruit and clover belt. $15 to $30 per acre. 10 acres $10.00 to $60.00 down, 40 acres $25 to $100 down. Balance on easy monthly or yearly payments. Excellent for general farming, stock, dairying, poultry, vegetables and fruit. Near markets, schools, good transportation. Big booklet free. Swigart Land Co., X1245 First Nat'l Bk. Building, Chicago, Illinois.

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LARGE PROFITS DAILY MADE IN THIS business. Openings everywhere. Small capital starts you. Complete outfits sold on installments. No experience needed. Our machines are used and endorsed by Government Institutions. Catalog free. Atlas Moving Picture Company, Morton Building, Chicago.

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OLD COINS WANTED

WILL PAY $7.00 FOR 1853 QUARTER, NO arrows; $100.00 for 1853 half without arrows; $2.00 for 1904 dollar, proof. We buy all rare coins to 1912, cents, nickels, dimes, etc., to dollars, and old bills. Cash premiums paid. Send us 4c. Get our Large Coin Circular. Numismatic Bank, Dept. 12, Fort Worth, Texas.

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SUFFERERS FROM KIDNEY AND BLADder trouble, causing backache, nervousness, tired and worn out feeling, frequent desire to urinate, smarting and burning. Do not suffer any longer but write us for free symptom blank and advice. Allied Medical Institute, 22 Washington Ave., So., Minneapolis, Minn.

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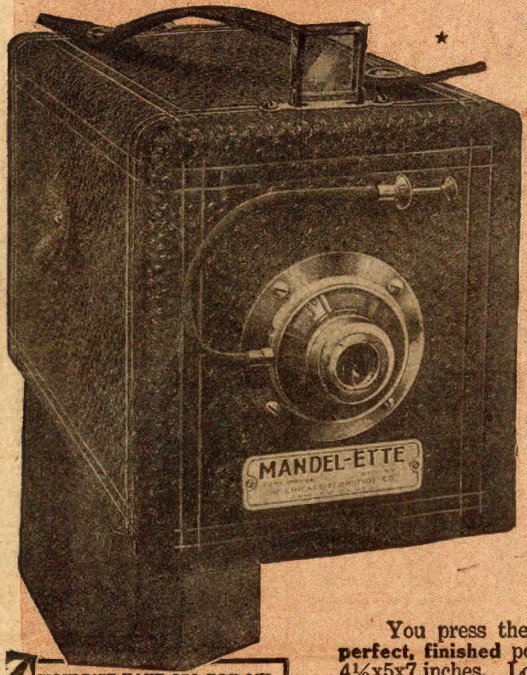

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Only 10,000 of these marvelous, instantaneous picture-taking and making cameras to be sent out absolutely on approval without a penny in advance just to prove that it is the most wonderful invention—the camera sensation of the age. So **you** must send for it **quick!** Just think of it—the new Mandel-ette

Takes and Makes Finished Pictures INSTANTLY!

You press the button, drop card in developer and in **one minute** take out a **perfect, finished** post card photo 2½x3½ inches in size. Camera, itself, is about 4½x5x7 inches. Loads in daylight 16 to 50 post cards at one time.

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Not a bit of the muss and bother of the ordinary kodak or camera. It is instantaneous photography! Universal focus lens produces sharp pictures at all distances. Pictures develop and print automatically. Can't overdevelop. Results positively amazing.

We Trust You

No difference who you are, where you live or what your age, we will send you the complete "mandel-ette" outfit absolutely on approval and give you 10 days to test it. If not satisfactory return it. But when you see what elegant pictures it takes—so quick, so easy, with no trouble at all—if you wish to keep it you simply send us $1 per month until our special price of only $5.50 is paid.

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No red tape of any kind. Monthly payments so small you'll not notice them. Simply fill out and send coupon today. Send no money. No references required. Lots of fun and big profits.

No Experience Required

Plain instructions and everything complete with outfit so you can begin taking pictures the moment it arrives. We guarantee that even a child can operate it. Mail coupon now. No risk or obligation to keep camera.

Chicago Ferrotype Company,
Desk 285 Ferrotype Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

WOULDN'T TAKE $50 FOR MY "MANDEL-ETTE"

I received the "Mandel-ette" Camera yesterday and am well pleased with it. Learned how to make good pictures in an hour and would not take $50 for it if I could not get another one.
Alfred L. Dustman, Berlin Center, Ohio.

IT'S A WONDER

The "Mandel-ette" safely at hand, and I am getting fine pictures "first crack out of the box." It's a wonder and I anticipate much pleasure in operating it.
W. H. Starkweather,
Wisconsin Veterans' Home, Wis.

$14 IN 5 HOURS

The "Mandel-ette" Camera I got from you some time ago is a wonder. I took in $14 in about five hours with it on the 4th.
C. A. Sund, Blabon, N. Dak.

EVERYBODY LIKES IT

I received my "Mandel-ette" some time ago. It was in good shape and everything O. K. I am well pleased with it. Everybody likes it.
A. A. Newhall, Surf, Calif.

BEST CAMERA IN THE WORLD

I am so well pleased with the "Mandel-ette" that I would not take $25 for it if I could not get another like it. I know that when people learn the "Mandel-ette" process they will never be satisfied with the old plate and film cameras and there will be a big demand for the best camera in the world, "Mandel-ette."
A. H. Hoffman, Wildomar, Calif.

SURELY A WONDER

Received "Mandel-ette" as per agreement, and gentlemen, I wish to express my gratitude, most fully, for your prompt attention to my request.
I have already taken a few pictures with your camera, and I am forced to admit, that your so called "Mandel-ette" is most surely a Wonder. Arthur Hawthorn Lee,
Cousipur, Alberta

FINE RESULTS AT FIRST ATTEMPT

I received the camera all O. K. and I was surprised to see the results of the first attempts I made to turn out a photo. The "Mandel-ette" is one certainly worth the money and will do all you claim for it and even more. James Colyer, Monroe, Iowa.

GREAT PLEASURE WITH HIS

The Camera is certainly a dandy. I was surprised to know that it could take a photo so fast. I have had great pleasure with it. Everybody thinks it is the only thing.
Fred Witte, Central Point, Oregon

REMARKABLY CLEAR PICTURES

I received the "Mandel-ette" some time ago and am having all kinds of fun with it. It takes remarkably clear pictures. The "Mandel-ette" needs no recommendation. I just show the pictures to my friends and they all understand at once what a fine camera it is.
Gertrude E. Geaer, Bangor, Wis.

CAN'T BE BEAT

I beg to thank you for your "Mandel-ette". I got it all right. It is a daisy. The machine can't be beat, there is nothing like it.
James McDowell, Bismark, Mo.

PLEASED

Received my "Mandel-ette" on Saturday and am well pleased with it. I have never taken a camera or kodak picture before but my pictures were good. I would recommend the "Mandel-ette" to anybody wanting a good, inexpensive camera.
Margaret Smithe, Dexter, Mo.

$8 IN 4 HOURS—COULD HAVE MADE MORE

I got the "Mandel-ette" on Friday evening and started work on Saturday morning. Made $8 the first four hours and run out of cards. Could have made that much more if I had cards. Harry Singleton, Claysburg, Pa.

PICTURES A SURPRISE

Am well pleased with the "Mandel-ette". Had no previous experience with cameras or kodaks before but found the "Mandel-ette" very easy to operate. It does all you claim for it—the "One Minute" pictures are a surprise to everyone. Thank you for your promptness in sending the camera and supplies.
Mrs. Anna Hegner, Beaver Falls, Pa.

SURPRISED ABBOTT

I received my "Mandel-ette" and full equipment in fine condition. Have made several pictures, which surprised me, they being so natural. I have no knowledge of photography whatever, but made fine pictures at first attempt.
I expect to have lots of fun with my "Mandel-ette" in the future.
Horace B. Abbot, Beaukiss, Texas

Chicago Ferrotype Co.,
Desk 285 Ferrotype Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

Send me at once one complete model Mandel-ette Camera outfit including supply of post cards and instructions. I agree to examine and test it thoroughly and if satisfied keep it and pay you $1 a month until your special price of $5.50 is paid. Otherwise I will return it at the end of 10 days.

Name .....

Street and No .....

Town ..... State .....